

It Seems That I've Slipped Into a Different World. Also, My Gender Has Changed

Arc 1 – Spring of New Life

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Epub: [Trollo WN/LN EPUB](#)

Prologue

No way.

When I was still a brat in elementary school, carrying a backpack bigger than I was, I had indeed said back then that “I must have been born in this world by mistake, and I should have been born in a different world instead.”

But really, that was just the delusion of a kid. It was a popular manga and anime setting back then, that’s why I’d gotten really into it as well. Because I was also bullied a bit at the orphanage I grew up in, that’s why I had wanted to escape from reality.

I had felt like I shouldn’t have been born in this world, and I should have been born in a happier and more fortunate world instead.

It was just a childish dream. Or should have been.

In the first place, me thinking that “I was born in this world by mistake” was because I didn’t have any parents. I was left in front of an orphanage as a baby, so the orphanage took me in. Apparently my girlish sounding name, Seiren, was stitched into the clothes I was wearing as a baby.

Also, I guess it was supposed to be a protective charm of some sort, but I had a baby ring come with me on my finger? It’s a ring with a blue stone embedded in it. Since it’s too small for me now, I wear it around my neck in a handmade pouch.I made it myself, is that wrong? I’m good at sewing my clothes and patching up my shoes, this is nothing to me.

Oh, the orphanage director gave me his last name of Shikino. That way, to others it would seem like I was Director Touya Shikino's son, Seiren, I think. Well, I don't really know why though.

And, I've stayed here at the orphanage and I'm currently 18. I didn't really have to worry too much about money issues, and I went to ordinary elementary and middle schools and graduated with average grades. The director took care of my needs, and other than that I don't remember much else. I pretty much didn't have any friends at school, nor did I participate in any club activities. With my free time I just worked part time jobs, to save up some money for myself. I figured that after I graduated high school, I would continue working at the nearby factory that I'm currently working at part-time, and make a living like that.

Since the orphanage director had treated me so well like I was his actual son, I wanted to pay him back someday.

"Alright, Seiren. I'm going to go back first and prepare for your graduation party, so you should come back without taking any detours today."

"Got it, director. I don't have anywhere else I need to go today."

After taking a commemorative photograph of me for my graduation ceremony, the director patted my head. His hair is completely white now, and his wrinkles make him look older than he actually is, but he's only in his upper 50's right now. He also looks beefy and has wide shoulders, and I'm envious of that as I'm slenderly built and have a girlish face.

Because of my face, I was bullied a bit in school as well, but because the director always told me to pay them no mind, I was able to keep doing my best.

Although, since I have some strength for my size, I couldn't help but get angry and fight back a few times as well.

Even though I'm half a head taller now than the director, I'll always see myself as his son. I don't think anything will ever change that.

"Ah, but since it would be bad if you came back before the preparations are ready, go ahead and take your time coming home."

"Ohh, thanks for letting me know. Otherwise, I would have rushed back eagerly!"

The director slapped me on my back with a hearty laugh as he hurriedly left on his bike. I waved my hand at him as I watched him leave. I watched him until he disappeared around the corner, before I started walking back to the orphanage as well.

I stopped at an intersection about five minutes away from the orphanage on my way there. I bought some hot cocoa from a vending machine, and took a little break.

"Mmm. Delicious."

Although I think it's slightly girlish, I think that sweet things are able to calm my mind. It's not like I really love sweet things or anything like that. I mean, foods like chocolate and cakes, are supposed to be good for the brain, right?

After I finished drinking it, I threw the can away in a recycling bin. I started walking leisurely again as the can rattled in the metallic bin. Like the director

said, I'll give them enough time to prepare the party for me, so I'll walk back slowly.

I imagined the brats at the orphanage preparing for a party all sparkly-eyed and squealing. I remember that I helped prepare parties for the older boys and girls when they graduated as well. But, I don't really speak to anyone there much, other than the director.

Normally it's a 15 minute walk for me from high school to my home, the orphanage, but this time I took 20 minutes. At the entrance, I heard bustling voices. Since everyone will get to eat a lot of good food at my graduation party, I bet they're all looking forward to it.

Alright, they're probably ready, so let's go in.

"I'm back-"

I raised my voice, and opened the slightly heavy door.

Suddenly, everything was spinning around me. The moment I let go of the door, it felt like I had no strength in my body, and I was teetering. Uh oh, this is bad, I can barely stand.

".....!?"

I tried to catch myself against the door, but my hand slipped right through it. It's as if it was just an illusion.

In the distance, I could hear the director calling for me, as I disappeared from that location.

“Master, Madam, it has succeeded.”

I suddenly heard an old man’s voice coming from above me, and I shouted out in surprise with an “eh!?” Oh, my dizziness is gone.

Then, I noticed my surroundings.

I seem to be in a really large room for some reason. At least I think so, because I seem to be sitting on a really plush carpet, and the light from above me is coming from a chandelier rather than the sun.

No wait, I should have been at the entrance to the orphanage? Then, why would I be in the middle of a place like this?

“I finally get to see you again! Ohh, my cute daughter!”

Besides, what’s with all this? Why is this old lady I don’t even know suddenly hugging me?

Come to think of it, did she just say daughter?

I’m a guy..... but, I feel something strange on my chest.

There seems to be some sort of cushion stuck between my chest and the old

lady's chest while she was hugging me. No wait, it's not a cushion, this, is.

".....Huh?"

Why, do I have boobs!?

Chapter 1 – For now, let's confirm the situation

Alright, let's try to figure out what's going on. What is the current situation.

I'm Seiren Shikino, who just graduated happily from high school, and I should have just returned to my home, the orphanage.

Right when I opened the door to go in, I suddenly started feeling dizzy. Then, for some reason, I woke up here in what seems to be the room of some really rich family's house. This lady suddenly hugged me, and is calling me her daughter.

I should have had a male body, but somehow it seems to have turned female. It seems that I have breasts..... and I think that thing down there is gone too. Although, I don't have the courage to check right now in front of others.

If I was a manga or anime character, I would probably be screaming right now, but instead nothing came out of my throat. Meaning I haven't fully processed this situation yet, as if my brain wasn't receiving enough oxygen. Well, if I don't work on figuring out what's going on then I would panic, but it still feels like I haven't grasped what's going on yet.

Alright, let's calm down first for now.

First, let's check out the lady in front of me. She just called me her daughter.

"Oh, Seiren..... I'm so glad....."

The lady hugging me has grey hair beginning to slightly mix with her black hair, has an elegant air to her and seems to be roughly 50 years old. She's wearing a thick but free-flowing dress, and there's a nice scent of some sort of perfume coming from her. While being hugged by her and smelling her scent, I said nothing.

I also noticed now, that there's also an old man standing behind her, who seems like he's roughly 60, and has quite the nice mustache. He looked slightly absent-minded as he had a flustered expression. His silver hair was tidily combed, and I thought he looked crisp and cool.

Thinking about it, I guess he's probably this lady's husband. He's wearing a long..... bathrobe? It was loose-fitting, and the cloth seemed to be high quality. There was some sort of pattern embroidered into it.

Also, there was one more person in the room.

There was an even more elderly old man next to the two of them, scratching his chest. I think he was the one that said something succeeded earlier. His voice was quite hoarse.

He had long white hair and a white beard surrounding his wrinkly face, and he was wearing black..... almost robe-like clothes that seemed slightly stiff, he reminded me of a wizard right out of a story book. He's even holding on to a wooden staff, it couldn't be.

"Seiren?"

“Eh, ah, yes.”

When the lady called my name, I answered reflexively. Wow, my voice is much higher. I really have become a girl.

Anyways..... Although this isn't the most important problem right now..... But why does she know my name, I wonder. My school uniform shouldn't have had my first name Seiren on it, only my last name Shikino.

Seeing her face from so close, she looked really happy, yet her face was also wet with tears. Having her face so close to mine, I didn't even know how to react. I do think she seems very kind though.

Then, the old man that looked like a wizard walked closer to me, hardly making any sound. I only noticed because his robe made slight dragging sounds against the carpet.

Then, he looked directly at me, and I confirmed immediately that he had been the one that said something succeeded earlier when he spoke up and laughed with the same voice from earlier.

“Seiren-sama, please don't worry. Madam here, is unmistakably your mother.”

“Huh?”

Mother. Even if you suddenly say so, how am I supposed to answer.

I'm an abandoned child, that the orphanage raised. Although I would have loved to have a mother as well, I gave up on that long ago in my childhood.

Of course, nobody ever came to school for my parent-teacher conferences, but I was fine because I had the orphanage director. I had gotten stubborn in my ways about that when I was still only 10.

Even if my mother suddenly appeared in front of me, what would that be, I'd be troubled. I don't really know how to explain it, but I'd be troubled.

This lady that's supposed to be my mother just kept looking at me without saying anything, all teary-eyed. No, don't make that face at me.

"I'm so sorry, Seiren. I wasn't able to see you until you've grown up so much. I even wondered if your ring had gotten lost."

".....Ah, uh..... Eh?"

I was startled at what she just said. My ring.

"Ah, could you mean..... This, right here."

I hurriedly dug into my jacket pocket. I noticed that my jacket seems to have gotten bigger on me.

Well, it doesn't matter right now, and I found it in my pocket where I always keep it in its pouch. The moment I touched it, I felt some sort of gentle feeling, but I ignored it. I don't know what's going on right now, so I'll think about it

later.

“You mean, this?”

“.....! Dear, this is!”

“Ohh, there’s no mistake. This is Seiren’s birthday ring!”

The moment I brought my ring out of its pouch, the old man and lady’s expressions became so joyous.

Ah, they were being serious. I wonder if I’m really their child then.

No wait no wait.

Rather than figuring out whose child I am, I haven’t figured out the most fundamental problem just yet. I’d gotten sidetracked.

In the first place, why do I have breasts now. Why, are they calling me their daughter.

“Ohh, I’m so sorry. Master, Madam, I have something I must inform you of first.”

Suddenly, the old wizard-looking man smacked his fist into his open palm as if he just remembered something. At his words, the elderly couple looked at each other, then looked at the older man. Also, I did as well.

“Before we summoned Seiren-sama over here, she had a boy’s body. When crossing worlds, it seems that the magic also changed her gender. Luckily, now that she’s back, that magic’s been dispelled.”

“Eh?”

“What?”

Magic. Dispelling.

Um, what? Old man. Also, could he be a real wizard, this person?

In the first place, he just talked about magic like it was the most natural thing in the world, is that the kind of place this is? This is bad, am I not on Earth anymore?

What’s more. What he just said, I was originally a girl to begin with?

No, even if I was a bit girlish before, still. Even if I really loved sweets. Saying that I was a girl originally to begin with..... Is that even possible, this is ridiculous.

Although I kind of wanted to go on a rampage, I couldn’t help but stop myself in front of this lady and the look in her eyes. Because I’ve always put up with so much ever since I was little, at this strange point in time I’m able to be patient.

“.....Were you a, boy? Seiren.”

“Yes, um, before I came here, yes.”

“Is that how it is..... I did think your clothes didn’t seem like a girl’s.”

So. Going by what the old magician just said, the other two people seem to be my parents, and everyone seems to be a bit confused.

Well, of course. It seems that they were looking for their daughter, and they seem to think that I’m that daughter.

To hear that this daughter was a “boy” instead until just now, anyone would be confused.

Once again, I tried to check my own appearance. Although since I don’t have a mirror right now, I don’t know what my face looks like.

I’m still wearing the same thing as earlier, my high school uniform. Of course, it’s the boys’ uniform. My last name was on my uniform, and the school’s rose emblem was embroidered underneath. My graduation diploma..... doesn’t seem to be on me. I must have dropped it while coming here or something.

Anyways, it definitely seems that my chest has gotten a bit bigger, I noticed that my shirt had gotten quite tight around my chest. Also, my jacket had gotten much baggier on me, and the sleeves had gotten too long for my hands. Urgh, rather than saying the jacket changed, I think it’s because I’ve gotten smaller.

Also, my pants. It had gotten really loose around my waist, and I think that if I stand up my pants would probably fall straight off. For now, I'm going to tighten my belt a lot more.

Also, I think my hair's gotten longer. I definitely know that during my graduation ceremony, my hair wasn't long enough to touch the back of my neck. Mm, I confirmed it with my hands. I think it's about shoulder length now, it's definitely gotten longer.

If someone looked at me right now, I'm sure they would see a girl wearing a boy's school uniform. It does seem that my body's changed. Although, I did have a girlish face before that made me seem like I was cosplaying at wearing a boy's school uniform, so maybe it's not that much of a change.

"Seiren."

The old man standing behind the lady who had remained silent for a while..... who seems to be my father, called my name. I answered him normally with a "yes," maybe it's because he reminded me of the orphanage director who had always treated me well and loved me as his own.

He really feels similar to the person who acted as my father, this father of mine. This person who hugged me instantly without hesitation, seems to be my mother.

Are they really my parents, I don't know yet though.

"First, come with me. I'm sure you want to talk. I assume you also want to know what happened to yourself."

.....First, I have to gather information, although I don't know what I'm supposed to do from now on.

That's why I obediently nodded. Well, it's also because the calm old magician's words seemed gentle and nostalgic somehow, there was that as well.

Chapter 2 – Anyways, let's hear an explanation

For now, I adjusted my clothes so that I could move more comfortably, and with the lady..... no, I'll call her my temporary mother for now, we walked out to the hall together. The old man, I mean, my temporary father, and the magician seeming older man also came along. Well, this is all temporary, I'll figure out what to call them later.

Outside this room, was a tall middle-aged man that I think is around 40 years old, with compact, slick black hair. He seems to be wearing ordinary slacks, as well as a cardigan jacket reaching to his knees. His black clothes look good on him, and he's fairly handsome as well.

Father looked directly at him, and introduced him to me.

"Seiren. This is our chief steward, Sylvester. He's in charge of all other servants here."

"My name is Sylvester. Seiren-sama, congratulations on returning safely."

".....Oh, ahh, thanks."

Since Sylvester-san was bowing deeply towards me, I panicked and bowed back at him as well. I don't really know what a chief steward is though, I wonder if he's some type of butler.

Come to think of it, he's in charge of all other servants. That means, there's

more than one other servant here. Wow, they're really rich, it feels like something straight out of an anime or drama.

"I shall guide you, please come this way," and Sylvester-san led us down the corridor. Since it's thickly carpeted everywhere, it feels nice to walk on. I mean, it's so soft and fluffy that I'm not used to this feeling, though.

The ceiling is really high up, and supported by thick pillars lined up in a row, and the walls seemed to be made of marble. I can't even see seams on the marble, I wonder if they cut the entire wall out of one marble block. Alright, they're definitely really rich.

.....Although I forgot momentarily, I noticed it again as I was walking. Aside from the fact that my uniform doesn't fit me properly anymore, my shoes didn't fit me properly now either, making it slightly more difficult to walk. Well, though..... I don't think I need to keep my sneakers on here. I think my feet will get sore if I keep walking like this, so I took them off before continuing.

While I was busy with my own thoughts, we seem to have arrived. We passed through a really thick wooden door that seemed like it would absolutely smash my fingers if I wasn't careful, to a room that appeared like a type of drawing room.

This room was about as big as the orphanage's cafeteria, and just like the halls, it was softly carpeted all over, with some sofas and a wooden table in the middle. The table looks heavy enough that it probably won't budge even if I kick it.

Whoa, there was also a maid pushing a cart with a tea set on it here, wearing her black hair in pigtails with a maid uniform on. I'm guessing she's not the only

maid, there's probably others as well.

There were large portraits hanging from the walls, and there were also ceramics and dolls lining the shelves. There was also a fireplace in the back. Ah, that's right, this type of world usually doesn't have air conditioning. No matter how I look, this doesn't seem like my world. This seems more like what I was dreaming about when I was just a little kid. I've always wondered if I was born into the wrong world, if there had been a mistake somewhere.

Wait, no no no no. Calm down, Seiren Shikino. I don't even know where I am or what's going on right now.

"Please, have a seat."

"Oh, uh, thanks."

Since I kept standing while being lost in my thoughts, Sylvester-san prompted me to sit down. Ohh, this sofa is nice and comfy.

My mother and father (temp) sat down across the table from me. Although he arrived a little after us, the old magician also sat down in a chair diagonally across from me. Sylvester-san also moved about around us, making hardly any noise. Everyone seems to be getting along well in harmony.

The maid-san snappily prepared tea for all of us. The tableware had gold colored patterns drawn onto it against a white background, once again I wondered just how ridiculously expensive this must have been. The tea..... doesn't seem to be something I'm familiar with, but it smells nice. It was also served with cookies..... I think it's sable. I don't know if there's any differences,

but that's the feeling I get.

"Well then."

After everyone had some tea, the old magician cleared his throat and looked around at everyone. I couldn't help but correct my posture and sit up straight, but everyone else remained relaxed as he began talking. Seeing how unreserved everyone was acting, I definitely feel like this place is different from what I'm used to.

"First of all, Seiren-sama, I'll begin with an explanation about yourself?"

".....Alright."

I nodded at what the old magician said. At any rate, I also want to know what's going on. Really, I have no idea how I got "involved" in all this to begin with.

"Seiren-sama. I believe that your real name should be Seiren Shiya. These two you see in front of you should be your parents. Mondo-sama is the current head of the Shiya family, and this is his wife Maya-sama."

"Since you're saying he's the head of the family, this must be quite an amazing family."

"Yes. The Shiya family is the lord of this region."

Seiren Shiya. He's saying that's my name.

And, that these two people in front of me, are my actual parents.

Honestly, I don't even know what to feel about all this, or whether I should begin addressing them as mother and father.

I wonder if I can even say mom and dad out loud, me.

So it seems they're some sort of nobles. I wonder if he means the type with a lot of land and villagers working for them. And, I'm supposed to be the child of such a family.

I still don't feel like it's real yet. Or rather, it feels more like this is all a mix-up or misunderstanding of some sort.

If it wasn't for the baby ring being evidence, I'd really think that was the case.

"Since your parents were a bit older than average when they were finally able to have you, they were extremely overjoyed at the birth of Seiren-sama."

"....."

As he said so, I couldn't help but take another look at my presumed parents. My father's expression seemed slightly stiff, but mother seemed to be smiling very happily.

Ahh, so she's very happy. So maybe I do have parents that love me. The orphanage director had always treated me very well, but even so I had always

felt like parental love would be something different.

“However, something happened about one month right after Seiren-sama was born. When your parents and your nanny left you alone for just a short period of time, you disappeared from the room, no, from the entire mansion. You were wearing clothes embroidered with your name on it, and this baby ring at the time you disappeared.”

“.....Mm.”

Oi oi, this is a little too much to take in for me right now, I'll just keep it all in mind. Indeed, this does sound like the situation that I was found in by the orphanage. Everything seems to fit.

Then, I realized. My name was embroidered on my clothes. That's why I was called Seiren. That the name Seiren written in the language of this world, was also readable on Earth.

.....As I thought about what it all meant, Sylvester-san and my parents suddenly all lowered their heads towards me.

“I'm sorry Seiren, if only I had been able to be with you at that time.....”

“No, it's my fault that you were neglected. My apologies.....”

“It's my fault for not having any servants around you. Even though I know that I shouldn't be forgiven no matter how much I apologize, I still wish to say that I've truly sorry, Seiren-sama.”

“.....Um, it’s okay.....”

Mother, father, and Sylvester-san all spoke up at once. I’m troubled that they’re all trying to apologize to me. Although I mostly understand their story now, I still haven’t come to terms with it.

And so, I’ve grown up properly to be 18 years old, and I’m in front of my parents now.

Even if I say that, what’s with this situation.

The only daughter of a really well-off family went missing, when she was only one month old. Everyone involved back then seems to be here now, other than the nanny, and they’re all really nice people.

And of course, that would have been a great blow to my parents. Or to anyone else for that matter, if their only daughter went missing.

“.....Even so, finally, finally, we were able to find you today.”

“Roughly speaking, that’s what happened. I hope that this explanation shall suffice.”

During all this, the old magician had his eyes almost closed, and kept nodding at me. Well, I can hear the finer details later, and I understand that they’ve gone through a lot because of all this as well.

Although.

“.....So, you’ve been searching for 18 years? For me.”

“Of course! Since my cute child’s been missing for all this time!”

Although it was a question I asked hesitantly, I got a reply almost immediately. Those eyes seemed to be looking at me strictly, but there was a nostalgic feel to them as well.

.....Somehow, it feels like I’m really relieved inside.

Without any logic to it, for some reason I’m convinced that these are my real parents. It’s the same feeling I have towards the orphanage director on my original world.

It seems that I do have a family I can belong to.

For some reason that I didn’t fully comprehend, my chest felt warm inside.

Chapter 3 – Somehow, I'll just wait in my room

“This is Seiren-sama's room.”

“Um. All of this?”

“Yes. Also, there's another room in the back of your bedroom. Is this too small for you?”

“No, that's not it. It's so big.”

I couldn't help but tell my honest feelings, and the black-haired maid in pigtails smiled wryly. I guess that what I'm thinking is still somewhat close to normal even here, I was a bit relieved.

The place I'm at right now, seems just like the fancy bedroom of some noble. No wait, it is.

Before, I only had a simple wardrobe, sofa, and table, which would only take up a corner of this large room. There's also a small chandelier that looks like it will really hurt if it fell on me hanging from the ceiling. Well, it's small compared to the chandelier in the drawing room. If that one ever fell, it would probably cause a life-threatening injury, one that could send me off to yet another world.

Also, there was a canopied bed in the bedroom. If I squint, I can also make out what seems to be some sort of writing desk, with several books on top of it.

Having all this space just to myself, wow. In the orphanage, I would share a small room with several others, and everyone would have to crowd around a single table in order to study.

What's more, all this furniture seems so simple in design. I'm used to everything being simple already, so this is surprising. I don't know what else to say.

Also, everything seems new. I can tell just by looking at the furniture and carpet and curtains. They don't appear to be used.

"Has this furniture always been here?"

"This was placed here one month ago. In order to welcome Seiren-sama who's grown up now, new items were purchased."

At hearing the maid's reply, I was lost for words for a moment. My parents had prepared this room for my return. Since they didn't know my tastes, they probably kept everything simple intentionally. Although, it still seems slightly girlish to me, and I was raised as a guy.

".....Was this room prepared for my return?"

"Yes. I'll guide you in."

I couldn't say anything else as there was a clogged feeling inside my chest, while the maid just smiled gently at me.

Oh, let me give an explanation. It seems that basically everything here is the same as on Earth, with very few changes in names or what I'm used to. Well, other than the fact that there's no electricity here, and the chandelier is powered by magic. Anyways, I have a question first.

"Formal clothes are here in this drawer, and this is regular clothing. Nightclothes and underwear are here."

"Uh, thank you..... Underwear?"

As the maid showed the drawers of the wardrobe to me, I noticed a problem.

I've, turned into a girl. What's more, I was their "daughter" to begin with.

Meaning, everything prepared for me to wear was girls' clothes. This includes clothes, shoes, and of course underwear.

Yeah, the problem is definitely with the last part. Even though I'm in a girl's body, I was male up until a few hours ago. I feel like as if I'd be cosplaying, wearing female clothing.

"Is something the matter?"

".....Um, girls' clothes..... Wow~"

Sorry, maid-san. I don't know what she's thinking, but just let me clutch my head for a little bit.

Wearing female underwear while mentally male inside, I'm going to have to overcome some barriers. Come to think of it, while I was walking, I felt a strange sensation of my chest wobbling. I finally understood why it was that girls wore bras. With it shaking like that, especially if it's too large, it would definitely hurt, I imagine.

"So, please make yourself at home here. In a little bit, Sylvester-san will be coming by, so please let him in."

"Ah, okay. Thank you very much."

After giving me a tour and explanation of my room, the maid with three black pigtails bowed and exited the room. I heard the sound of the door closing softly, and kept thinking about how ridiculous and impressive this family was.

Now that I'm by myself, I looked over my room again. There's no sofa and table here, and no brats from the orphanage running about, I couldn't help but think about them.

After all, it felt kind of fun there. There was the orphanage director, there were some older kids, and there were lots of little brats running around. Every day was bustling and fun.

And, everything's changed so much in just the short time of a few hours. I've turned into a girl, and I've somehow slipped into a different world, and become a respectable family's daughter.

Anyways, wow, I'm going to have two rooms to myself.

".....So big."

It's so luxurious, really. It's all in all a bit of a girlish room, but that's to be expected, since I'm supposed to be a girl.

When I checked the drawers of the wardrobe again, I saw piles and piles of dresses. There's ones that look really tight, as well as ones that look like they leave way too much space for the chest. I wouldn't really know if they're the right size without trying them on. Er, what do I do if they don't fit. I hope they're easy to adjust if the size isn't right, since buying even more clothes seems like a waste.

".....No, that's not it. These are supposed to be clothes for me."

I had to talk to myself out loud. If I didn't, I wouldn't be able to prepare myself mentally. At any rate, I need to ask the old magician more about the magic that returned me here and turned me into a girl..... Ah, oops. I forgot to ask his name.

I prepared myself, and put my hand on the bottom drawer. This one, will have women's underwear in it. Panties, bras..... am I going to have to get used to using these? Wow, this seems daunting.

This is bad, I'm not ready to open it. Although I know I'll probably have to face it in a few hours, for now I'll just leave this drawer alone. I'm gonna avoid reality for now.

Come to think of it, let's take a look at me now.

".....So this is what I look like."

There was a full-length mirror next to the wardrobe, so I decided to check my appearance. My black hair that had nothing special about it when I was a guy was now suddenly shoulder-length, when I had kept it fairly short before.

I'm still skinny like before, and well, a bit rounder in some places. I took off my jacket because it had gotten too large on me, it feels like I'm the size of me from three years ago now.

As for my face..... everyone used to say I looked a bit girlish before, and it didn't change much. It's just that, I think my eyes have gotten bigger and narrower. If I ignore the fact that I'm talking about myself, I'd think I'm cute.

So this is the current me, Seiren Shiya.

The original me, Seiren Shikino..... I guess he's not coming back. The old magician, had said that I was supposed to originally be a girl to begin with.

If I don't use some sort of gender changing magic spell, am I going to remain like this for the rest of my life.

"What should I do....."

Honestly speaking, of course I would have some regrets left behind about my

previous world.

Most of all, I wanted to thank the director for taking care of me for all those years. Besides, that small, bustling orphanage was still my home.

However, I felt it in my heart. That this was my real family, that this was the real world I came from.

So this is me.

“.....Mm.”

As I was thinking about things, my body trembled. This is bad, I felt a chill in my mind.

“.....Uh-oh, I need to go to the bathroom.”

I'm going to have to go to the bathroom in this world as a girl. I just drank some tea with everyone while listening to their story, and also had some cocoa in the previous world just earlier as well.

Whoops, I should have asked the maid just earlier about this. There doesn't seem to be a bathroom in this room, so I wonder if it's somewhere else. But I think I might get lost if I leave my room. It might be hard to find a bathroom by myself before I have to go.

Just as I was panicking about what to do, someone knocked on the door. By the way, it wasn't a knock from someone's knuckles, there was a door knocker

attached to the door. I had noticed it when I entered the room.

“Seiren-sama.”

“Mm? Ah, y-, yes.”

It’s Sylvester-san. Oh yeah, the maid had said earlier that he would come by. I wonder what he’s here for.

More importantly, can I hold it any longer, I wonder. For now, I’ll just sit on the sofa, and tell him it’s okay to come in. Since he serves my parents and I’m apparently his master’s daughter, I probably need to give him permission to enter.

“Sylvester-san? It’s fine to come in.”

“Excuse me.”

After I heard his voice, he entered with three maids behind him. One of them was the black pigtailed girl who had prepared the tea earlier and brought me here. I’m seeing the other two for the first time, as expected there must be a lot of servants here.

Then, Sylvester-san’s next words made my eyes go wide open in surprise.

“Allow me to introduce your personal maids to you, Seiren-sama. The three of them shall be attending and serving to your needs from now on.”

“Personal maids? Is this for real?”

“As the daughter of the Shiya family, this is only natural.”

Is that how it is. It’s considered natural to have three personal maids. At least in this family.

Meaning, there’s even more maids here. If even the daughter has three personal maids to herself, there might even be more than ten maids here.

Man, I can’t even imagine it anymore. Just how rich is this family.

While I just kept blinking, the black pigtailed maid smiled. Because she’s the first maid I met after coming here, I’m a little relieved that she’s with me.

“My name is Arika. I’ll be in your care.”

Then, the maid next to her, an almost expressionless taller girl with fluffy short hair bowed to me. Oi, her chest is huge. When I looked back down at my own breasts, I felt sympathy for how heavy they must be for her.

“My name is Minoa. Pleased to meet you.”

Lastly, the most petite of the three maids, a girl with curly hair introduced herself to me. Judging by her expression, she’s probably the typical lively type.

“My name is Oriza. I’ll be in your care.”

“Arika-san, Minoa-san, Oriza-san. I, I’ll be in your care.”

Anyways, so they’ll be taking care of me. I have to greet them properly, and lowered my head to them as well out of habit. Suddenly, my body reminded me that I had been holding it in and really needed to go to the bathroom. Uh-oh, this is bad, I really have to go soon.

“Ah, um, is it okay to ask something? I have an emergency.”

“What’s the matter!?”

When I hurriedly spoke up, Sylvester-san’s expression quickly changed to worry. Ahh, I have various things going on, you know. But right now, I want to ask the maids more than Sylvester-san. You know, because, because.

“Where the bathroom is, and how to use it, can someone tell me? I’ve been holding it in for quite a while.”

“Huh?”

You all, and even Sylvester-san, don’t just look at me with eyes wide open like that! It’s an emergency, an emergency!

Chapter 4 – Somehow, I figured out how to do my business

“Please excuse me, Seiren-sama. I should have guided you earlier”

“No, I didn’t consider it either. I’m really sorry for the panic.”

I earnestly felt sorry for the Sylvester-san who was standing at the bathroom entrance.

Even so, the me whom just recently became a female can’t possibly learn the method of using the bathroom here from the male Sylvester-san. Therefore, I intended to learn it from maid-san but Sylvester-san followed because he was worried.

「I’m going to teach~」 Oriza-san came out grinning broadly while looking here. Geez, don’t look at me like that.

“But Seiren-sama, you didn’t even need to hear about the method at all, right~?”

“It wasn’t that different from how it was in the other world. Honestly, its a relief.”

Besides the construction and specifics that I don’t know, it turns out that the method of using the bathroom is actually not that different from the western style bathrooms that I know. The toilet paper isn’t the roll type but rather, it is folded roughly into a square and piled up in the corner. The seat also seems to

be made up of ceramic and it was cold to the touch, but I won't complain. It seems to be properly cleaned too.

"But, even if I knew, I was shocked..."

"What is~?"

"..... Ah, no, its nothing"

Peeking at Oriza-san's face, I hastily shook my head.

The things I need to confirm at the bathroom, are not limited to just the place and usage method. Even though I didn't really want to see it, it can't be helped.

In the middle of my underwear. Un, I saw it. (Japanese male boxers have this slit in the middle for easier access and now 'it' was gone)

The thing that was supposed to be there wasn't there, it was completely flat.

I, seriously became female. How should I say it... I am dejected.

"Seiren-sama, are you okay?"

"Ah, Un, I'm okay. Just facing a bit of reality"

At times like this, Oriza-san's cheerful tone is a big help. No, it's similar to escaping reality. But I feel as if I'm no longer alone.

Back in the other world, the director filled this role. When I think about it, I may have depended on him...

Ah.. Really, if only I could have at least said a word of farewell..

Well, let me collect myself. Nothing will start even if I stay depressed in the corridor outside of the bathroom.

When I looked up, I suddenly saw Sylvester-san's face. If he is just here to

meet with the other maid-sans, he must have already finished his errands. And yet, he is still here.

I wonder if he still has any matters for me? Let's ask him.

"That reminds me, Sylvester-san, are you here to meet with the maid-sans that came to my room earlier?"

"That might be so but, I still have one more issue to take care of."

As I thought. The job of a butler is tough in various ways.

From my room to here, there appears to be quite some distance... As the bathroom is considered filthy, it seems that some distance has been placed. But even so, returning to my room just to listen to a new matter is ridiculous..

"What's the matter? It's fine if you say it here"

"Thank you very much. It is about dinner..."

".....Ah, it's that time."

Come to think of it, I didn't attend the party after the graduation ceremony. I was sent here just before reaching it.

It was at lunch, where things got noisy... Even if that much time has passed, it wasn't surprising.

The two worlds don't really have much of a time difference. Or is it just coincidence? By the way my stomach was going... Aun. I didn't notice because I was holding for it in the toilet, but I was just that hungry. Thanks to the tea and sable at the reception room, I seemed to be able to retain it for awhile...

"Originally the Sir and everyone would gather at the dining room and consume their meals but, the Madam was concerned that Seiren-sama had just

returned earlier and proposed that it would be better to give you time to collect yourself.”

As Sylvester-san said that, he made a slightly complicated expression.

Even so, those parents are perhaps trying too hard to be considerate of me.

On our first meeting, maybe not the first.. On our reunion, they were delighted to see me. Honestly, it wouldn't be a surprise if they even held a feast to celebrate our reunion. Though this, might just be a poor man(woman)'s train of thought..

“Seiren-sama, if you wish, I could have the arrangements made so that you can have your meal in your room today? How does it sound?”

But, father and mother are being considerate of me. Pulling me out of the world that I have been living in for 18 years and then suddenly expected to have dinner together is considered a big leap isn't it?

.....Isn't it fine if I just indulge in their consideration for today?

“.....Umm, I'll be having my meal in my room I guess. It seems that I still can't mentally change gears properly.”

“Understood. I will relay it to the Sir as such.”

When I conveyed the conclusion that I came to, Sylvester-san nodded without changing his expression.

To Oriza-san whom is looking at me with wonder from the side: please read the atmosphere. Even I have various things to consider. Though, to voice these thoughts after the toilet uproar...

“I’ll leave it to you. Also, could you convey my apologies for not being able to eat together?”

“Understood.”

For the time being, I tried adding it as an afterthought.

Because the both of them surely wanted to have a nice meal with the daughter that was finally found after 18 years.

“So, dinner preparations will be done by the accompanying 3 maids. I will excuse myself here.

“Thank you for the hard work. I appreciate the things you’ve done for me”

“This is my job after all, there is no need for thanks”

After settling the matter, Sylvester-san laughed shortly and bowed deeply before leaving. As expected of the top servant whom was supposed to be serving father...

I wonder if we can have a meal tomorrow... To be clamorously having a meal similar to eating at the orphanage, having a lively meal, seems impossible. But...

“Seiren-samaaa~”

“Owaa!?”

While I was engrossed in my thoughts, a girl’s face suddenly appeared in my vision with a ‘Doaappu’ feeling. Oriza-san seriously can’t read the atmosphere...

“D-don’t scare me like that..... What is it?”

“He he, sorry. Let’s return to the room, Seiren-sama”

Sticking her tongue out by the side, she should know that I'm seriously trying not to be angry... If she couldn't even realise that, she won't be able to continue as maid-san.

.....Eh, perhaps, can she actually read the atmosphere?

Well, the Oriza-san whom blew away my thoughts continued her words while smiling and laughing.

"Dinner will be prepared by Arika and Minoa though~ Before that, since you asked for a hot water bath and a change of clothes, I'll go and prepare?"

"Hot water bath. Ah, bath" (The distinction is made in Japanese as the english equivalent is the same thing between 湯浴み(Yuami)- Hotwater bath and 風呂 (Furo) Bath)

"Yes."

I see, so this is the reason why the maid-san were introduced so quickly.

Thinking back, I have yet to change out of my bulky oversized school uniform. As expected, I can't always remain in this appearance. At least, I need to change my shoes... How many times must reality crumble down on me?

Although I am having a meal by myself, I can't possibly have my meal looking like this. Before changing my outfit comes the bath and of course, such a thing is a given.

"Before dinner, I will get to purify Seiren-sama's body right~?"

".....Ha?"

"? What is the matter?"

Umm, stop for a moment, Oriza-san.

What's with 'purify Seiren-sama's body'!?

"Umm... Are you perhaps, following me to the bath?"

"Of course~ Washing our master's body is also part of our responsibilities~"

"Geh!"

To the Oriza-san that answered as if it was natural, I felt faint.

Here, is there no washing of our own bodies? Being washed by maid-san is natural?

I mean, I just became female not so long ago and haven't even seen my own naked body, I mean... No, I had already confirmed the bottom though.

Maid-san is going to be the first one to look at me utterly stark naked!?

Although we do enter the bath together in the orphanage, it's usually 'washing each other's backs' but never 'washing the body'.

"Ummm... Ehh, is that common in this world?"

"Yes. Is it different from where Seiren-sama has come from?"

"Basically, our bodies are our own responsibilities to wash. When people enter the bath together, from time to time they do wash each other but it's only till the extent of washing each other's backs."

"Haaa... Seiren-sama has been living the life of a commoner, right~"

"Well, commoners are commoners. I've been living as an orphan without parents after all."

As I flatly said that, Oriza-san was shocked for a moment as she looked at me. Then, '.....I'm sorry' was said in a small voice. Aun, this..., it would be better to explain the circumstances when everyone gathers together later...

If they knew about my situation, things might just end up becoming less

troublesome. From now on.

“A-N-Y-W-A-Y. It is a given that the ojou-sama of Shiiya house will be washed by maids during baths so, please get used to it.”

As for me getting used to the situation here, I can't get used to it and it's hopeless.

Chapter 5 - Leisurely Bathing, in a Giagantic Bath

It was my first time in a girl's bath.

Not only that, I'm also only familiar with a bath short enough for me to reach both ends of the bath at once, with my head still over the edge.

This bath is much larger, visibly able to hold more than one person at a time. It seems the tiles of the bath are also made of stone. Even with all the hot moisture of the bath, there wasn't any fan to help with ventilation, only the small vent above the bath. Looking up at the ceiling, it was barely visible.

The water for the bath was drawn from large hot water tanks, using tiny pumps that were attached to them. It was surprising, is this the sort of privilege offered to rich mansions like this? However, the hot water then has to be brought to boiling to stay warm, so I shouldn't stay here for too long.

Regardless, that seems to be the norm here, unlike the world I grew up in. Before, I would just quickly wash myself in the bath. I guess it's just a difference in culture. Coming back today would be an important occasion, as well. At least, this is what Oriza-san has been telling me. I don't know this world very well, which isn't ideal, so I'm thankful for any information offered.

"So do you understand now, Seiren-sama?"

"Yes, thank you. However, I still don't understand why you're here."

Oriza-san smiled happily while washing my arm carefully with a sponge. “I’m here to wash you clean.” She carefully lifted my arm to wash the inner side.

“Seiren-sama, even though you didn’t grow up in the Shiya household, you’re already accepted as part of the Shiya family.”

“Really?”

“Yes, your father and mother have always been thinking of you.”

Oh, I see.

My comfort is the most important thing to my parents, clearly. This is why, even after just coming back, they didn’t want me to feel forced to eat dinner with them.

I still couldn’t believe I was part of the rich noble Shiya family. It felt good to know that I belong to a family, but it was still still hard to get used to. In the orphanage I grew up in, I wasn’t even this well cared for by the cleaning staff. So really, I guess I should consider the situation for the staff here. But I’m still struggling with idea of having parents who are this rich. It’s too much to think about. Things were so much clearer with the director. They really are two different world, I’m still used to how things were back there.

“Seiren-sama, your chest has developed well.”

This. I thought I wouldn’t need to worry about it yet.... But this is a bath after all. In this house, it is normal that the maid will need to wash my entire body. Which means, of course, that my full naked body would be inspected too. This was an issue as well, I still can’t face the idea of being a girl due to my life in the

other world.

“You should probably keep in mind that this is my first time seeing such myself.”

“Don’t worry, they are a good size. Not too big, not too small.”

Oriza-san washed me carefully while telling me such. Yeah, she’s only here trying to help me, it is her job after all, but it was a lot to think about.

“Okay, now time for your lower body. May you please slightly spread your legs apart?”

“I, uh...”

“Don’t worry. Please, we need to make sure your legs are cleaned front to back.”

“It’s really not that big of a deal.”

“It’s important to take care of your legs too. I’m so envious of your well defined hips and thin waist.”

Well, uh, yeah. I wasn’t used to that either. She went over the details of my body so carefully, it was so embarrassing. Well, at least her massage of my arms, thighs, and calves weren’t all that uncomfortable.

Then she made sure to wipe my whole body down with a large towel near the bath. Well, it was at least similar to a towel, I wasn't exactly sure what it was made of. Still, it was a soft, comfortable fabric that quickly took the water from my body, so it works at least.

"Seiren-sama, lets get you dressed now. I've got a change of clothes ready for you."

Minoa-san showed up suddenly carrying an assortment of clothes, neatly folded in a basket tray, along with a set of underwear. Yes, including bras and panties, with a simple white design. They looked very light and soft.

"Oh, uh, thank you. I'm still not used to this sort of underwear."

"Don't worry, they will still suit you very well."

Minoa-san, thank you for figuring this out for me. It seems at least I can rely on the maids for figuring this stuff out for me. Mostly because they were a lot more familiar with such underwear.

I simply couldn't have figured this stuff out on my own. It wouldn't have taken too much time honestly to fluster my way over the lace of the panties, even considering that I never had to worry about this stuff in the other world. No, the problem was mostly the bras.

"... uh, how exactly do I put this on?"

"Oh? You've never wore a bra before, Seiren-sama? Even with such a chest?"

“Alright, first you need to put on both shoulder straps, making sure to not tangle the lower strap.”

It might be different now, but as a guy I never had to worry about such. There was never a reason for me to handle, let alone wear, a bra in the other world. There, my chest wasn't at all curved and developed like this. I've never had this weight pulling on my chest before. I never understood what girls had to deal with. Well, now I'll also have to deal with it too, I guess. Oh well...

“Uh, did I do this right?”

“Excellent, such suits you very well.”

My breasts fit comfortably within the cups of the bra. It seemed to even be the right size. Minoa-san continued to fuss over my outfit, looking impressed over how well it suited me, while Oriza-san went to the other side of the bath to start cleaning up. She got a metal rod which she used to open the tiny window I noticed a while ago. So that's how that works. With the help from the two of them, I did manage to get my bra on properly. I hope I could do the same on my own tomorrow. I guess if I can't, I can always ask for help again.

Next, she came up with a loose fitting light blue dress, which she had me wear. I had to put on the dress by pulling it up over my legs, and then clasp the button on my back. The belt that wrapped around it across my tummy was like that of a kimono. Woah, it swooshes easily as I move. I'll have to get used to this as well.

“Do you feeling comfortable in that?”

“I’m still not very familiar with these clothes. I think the belt might be done a little too tight.”

Minoa-san asked about my comfort while working on the buttons for my sleeves. Surprised at being told about the belt, she also looked into that with a “My apologise.”

“I’m still so very sorry. But these clothes are very becoming of you. It’s surprising that Seiren-sama seems so unfamiliar with such an outfit.”

“Yeah, I never had to worry about such belt problems when living with the Director. I’m sorry, I’ll just need time to get used to this.”

Well, no, it wasn’t just the belt. My tummy is much more capable of a greater tightness of a belt now too. With the director, I wasn’t able to wear something this fancy either. It was saddening to reflect on, so I shouldn’t reflect on it too heavily. Minoa-san really worked hard on this outfit, it was a marvellous dress.

“Seiren-sama, please sit so we can put your shoes on too.”

At this point, the bath had also been restored to its original cleanliness. I was guided over to a wooden chair to sit on. It seems Minoa-san even had a pair of replacement shoes in a box, ready for me. Which is another thing to get used to, my old shoes no longer fit. I mean, as a guy, my shoe size was 26 ((US size 8.5 mens or 10 ladies)), *but now they are probably 24 ((US size 6.5 mens 7.5 ladies))*, maybe less.

“Are the shoes the correct size?”

“I’m sorry, I don’t know exactly what size shoes I need.”

“I’ll help you figure it out, then.”

Without being phased at all by such information, Minoa-san took the shoes out of the box. I really couldn’t tell if the shoes fit by just looking at them, after all. The shoes looked like they suited my outfit. I wasn’t certain in this, but at least the ribbon of the shoes had the same design. I went to sit in the chair.

Anyway, this did demonstrate her talented maid-like skills, because..

“... wow, they fit perfectly.”

“Your toes aren’t too snug, right? Is the width comfortable?”

“Yup. I don’t know for certain without walking around in them, but so far no problems. Thank you very much.”

“ ... ”

“I will let you know if I find any problems.”

It’s true. My feet felt fine in these shoes, they weren’t noticeably tight. The sole felt a little hard, but I don’t expect anything could be done about that. Still softer than going bare foot. The heel was something to get used to, as was the fluffy ribbon of the shoes that wrapped around my ankles to keep the shoes secure. They really looked like a cute pair of white shoes, which somehow look

good on me after wearing them.

“Seiren-sama, we should go to your room now. Alica will be in your room now with your meal.”

“Oh, alright. Let’s get going then.”

“Yes, after you.”

Oriza-san and Minoa-san have helped me out a lot today. They really gave me a hand adapting as a woman. I carefully reflected on such as I got up from the chair.

Chapter 6 - Casual Conversations, During Dinner

“Oh, Seiren-sama! Welcome back, madam!”

When I returned back to my room with Oriza-san and Minoa-san, I was greeted by a smiling Alica-san and the dinner she had prepared for me. I could already faintly smell the delicious dinner from the other side of the door. It seems while I was having my bath, she had brought out a wooden table and chairs, covered with a white table cloth, and daintily decorated with a small vase containing white and yellow flowers. Placed on the table was a set of dinning wear, including a glass, a fork, and a knife. It looked like a formal arrangement I had only seen before on TV. As such, I wasn't exactly used to such an arrangement either.

“Thank you for your hard work. Did you arrange all this on your own?”

“No, Minoa helped with setting this up as well.”

“Oh, really? Thank you as well, Minoa-san.”

“Don't worry, it is our job after all to make sure you are well cared for.”

Well.. They might be my exclusive maids, working this hard for my own comfort. However, I still felt I should be thankful for all of their hard work. This was something that I felt did not need to change. Even if my body is now that of a girl, not everything has changed. While considering this, I suddenly noticed Alica-san was staring at me.

“Hmm? Yes, Alica-san?”

“Oh, sorry. Your outfit suits you very wonderfully.”

“Oh, uh.. Thank you very much.”

I politely accepted their praise. It was really embarrassing being regarded as beautiful like that. Even though I was happy to receive praise, it was really awkward being told that I suit this outfit, because I’m still not used to dressing as a girl. Even so, I need to remember that I am now a girl. Oriza-san was there to make sure I would not forget this.

“Seiren-sama has such a well developed figure, her chest has blossomed so well.”

“Uh, wait, what?!”

“Oriza, don’t embarrass the young lady like that.”

Minoa-san and I both reacted to the embarrassing evaluation together, with her quickly intervening. I had to admire how much friendly, even family, support I was getting here. I mean, it’s not that I think poorly of Oriza-san’s bodily reviews, her input was really helpful back in the bath, it’s just that kind of stuff really isn’t suitable to say in front of other people.

“Oriza-san, please be careful about what you say about me. I still don’t know how I should react.”

“I’m so very sorry. I will be careful in the future.”

She was very quick to apologies, it was sorta surprising.

“Oriza understands the need for your privacy, as is part of the honor of a maid. She will avoid such careless remarks in the presence of others.”

Minoa-san attempted to comfort me with such while glaring at Oriza.

The next problem was with dining etiquette.

“You hold your fork in your left hand, and your knife in your right. Here, let me give you a hand.”

“Oh, that will be very helpful.”

“I’m here if you have any difficulties with such etiquette, I don’t expect you to learn it all right away.”

I was really thankful that I wasn’t expected to master such right away. Really, eating should be the same in both worlds, something you just do to survive. For an appetiser, I was served a refreshing salted salad, along with some delicious creamy potato soup. The main course featured oil fried fish, which was delicious too. It filled me with a bit of energy. On the side was a bread basket, a nice round loaf of rustic bread. It was baked slightly dark, but it also was delicious. For dessert was a sort of fruit gelatin, which was sweet despite not having any notable sugars.

After finishing eating, I ended up at the sofa, drinking the same sort of tea Alica-san brewed when I was talking with my parents earlier. I wonder if this world even has coffee. I sorta miss a few things from the other world, but such won't be part of my life anymore.

"Thank you, all of the food was delicious."

"That's good to hear. I'll be certain to pass that on to the kitchen staff."

"Oh, yeah, sure."

Of course that's how things worked here. While Alica-san laughed, I simply nodded. Hehe, yeah, of course there would also be a chef doing the cooking here too. It's just that's not the sort of life I've adjusted to so far, I'm just gradually getting used to my new life here. While I turned slightly away in embarrassment, the maids each noticed attentively. Oh how absolutely embarrassing.. huh ((this is more of a sigh))..

"Oh, come to think of it, was Oriza's massage at the bath any good? I hope you were very satisfied with it?"

"Oh, yeah. She did very well."

"Hahaha, thank you. Actually, I learned my technique from Minoa."

"Minoa-san?"

“Yes.”

Alica-san sat there smiling while Oriza-san begun laughing happily at the new topic of conversation. Minoa-san glanced around quietly when she came up in conversation. Yeah, it was an interesting scene. This was a good kind of change.

” Seiren-sama, if you were pleased with my massage services, then when it is Minoa’s turn, you will feel like you are in heaven.”

“Oriza, stop exaggerating.”

“I’m serious, it will be that good.”

“Yes, I’ve even got to see the quality of the Minoa massage. I would have to agree that it really is that good.”

“Alica..”

Now it was Minoa-san’s turn to be shy and embarrassed, huh? Glancing among them as they talk, I’ve been uncertain how to express my own thought. However, I do understand, I’ve been uncertain know how to react to such sort of praise recently, myself.

“Hahah. Minoa-san, I’ll be looking forward to any chance of seeing just how good your massages really are.”

“Thank you very much.”

So as to not be any meaner after having been embarrassed myself earlier, I bowed to Minoa-san so that she could depart.

Minoa-san must have a lot of strength, to be able to so efficiently move around things like the table and chairs that were used for today's dinner. Oriza-san make sure to clean up all of the dishes. Really, I would have loved to help, too, but I was told that it was simply their job as a maid. So, instead I sat down with Alica-san on the sofa to continue talking over things with her.

"Today, all three of us were able to be here to help out Seiran-sama, but tomorrow's shift will only include two of us."

"Huh? You guys work in shift work?"

Well, considering it, it would be stupid to think that all three of them would care for me all the time. Though, that is one thing I must respect of the director. He was always there for me, all day long, every day of the week.

"Yes, such is a part of our contract."

"That seems reasonable. It is good that you are getting time off too. I'm already plenty thankful for getting any amount of care at all."

"Oh, no, thank you for your consideration, Seiran-sama."

I was at a loss for a moment as Alica-san deeply bowed her head. Then again, I think this is just the way things are over here. I was still glad to have someone I knew I could trust who will help me with what the future brings. It was already impressive that I would have access to three exclusive maids. It is enough if

there will only be two of them at a time in the future.

“So today’s special care, it was because I just returned?”

“Yes.”

I wondered at my own suspicions as Alica-san nodded her confirmation. After coming to face with that simple reply, Minoa-san and Oriza-san showed up again, having completed their work. Considering I just returned today, I should consider looking around my rather large home. I really should consider inquiring on Yuzuruha-san ((I have no idea where someone got “Sylvester” from that)), since I haven’t seen him for a while. He seemed to have disappeared hours ago... along with most of the male factors of my life, which becoming fleeting one after another. At this point I’m really uncertain regarding how I am expected to behave.

“As your father has disappointingly pointed out, it was because we didn’t make sure to sufficiently guard Seiran-sama that she disappeared. So since then, we’ve greatly improved on our security.”

“Ah, I see. It would have been hard for my mother and father to have suddenly found me missing like that.”

“Yes, it was.”

In other words, it was like Oriza-san said. I’m their daughter who was gone for 18 years, to have only just returned.

“This is why we were told to be your exclusive maids, so that this will never

happen again.”

Soon after I was born, I disappeared, leaving them without their daughter, and have only just now returned. While the amount of protection I’m getting is rather extensive, it does also make sense. I still remember mother throwing her arms around me when I appeared before her eyes, as she cried tears of joy. It really is a nice family, even if they are considerably over-protective. As such, even the maids are here to act as my guards, because my safety is seeing as something that important. This degree of security reminds me of the security systems from the other world.

In short, I should expect to be in the care of these three women.

“Yes, well, thank you once again. Alica-san, Minoa-san, Oriza-san.”

“Don’t worry about it, Seiren-sama.”

We then bowed to each other.

Chapter 7 - Sudden Awakening, with a Scenery of Dawn

“Seiren” ((Which is actually said with the characters for “Blue Lotus”, instead the usual straight katakana spelling.))

Hearing my name called, I turned around to see the Director standing there. I happily rushed over to see him as he gave me a congratulatory pat on the head for graduating. Oh, that’s right, I graduated from high school. Then the Director turned to me in conversation.

“You’ve made me very proud, working so hard.”

“Oh? I guess.”

However, all that hard work was in the past. From now on, in thanks for all my hard work, I was to become an adult. Even the same passage of age could be seen on the Director, not only has he been putting on weight, but as his hand settled on my shoulder the wrinkles became very apparent as he continued talking.

“Keep up the good work. We’re family, alright?”

Saying this with suddenly both hands on my shoulders, I suddenly feel like I’m falling through the floor.

For a moment I lay there in a daze, as I suddenly wake up. Opening my eyes, my view is greeted with fluffy feather pillows on a down bed ((down as in feathery, this is a very feathery bed)). It seems I slept buried in all of this pure whiteness.

“... uh, oh, yeah, right.”

As I sat up in the bed, I felt a bit of mild discomfort, still not being used to my body. Mostly with how my pyjamas felt on my chest... wait, pyjamas? This is more of a nightgown. My haziness of just waking up parted with me in the next moment as I became aware of the cause such discomfort.

“Ehhhhhhhhhh!!”

“Seiran-sama!?”

“Seiran-sama, is something the matter?”

As the two maids ran in alarm to check what was wrong, I started to recall the events that transpired yesterday. I was brought back to this world, and in the process became a woman.

“... oh, I’m sorry. Alica-san, Minoa-san, I didn’t mean to trouble you like this.”

“It’s fine, were you having a nightmare?”

“Poor Seiran-sama, everything will be alright now.”

Alica-san had a wry smile as Minoa-san came to help me get up. Well, it wasn't really my dreams that had me troubled right now.

"What sort of dream were you having... I'm sorry, I shouldn't pry into the young lady's thoughts."

"Oh, don't worry. I was just dreaming about the life I had before I came here."

Minoa-san dismissed her own question before she finished it, but I answered anyway. Though, I worry that my answer might give them the wrong ideas. The orphanage I was at after disappearing from this world really was a good home for me, I owe a lot to it. Until yesterday, it was like the Director was my real father.

"Oh, so that was it."

"It was probably because I was pulled from that world very suddenly. There is still a lot that I am thankful for in my time in that world."

"Ah, I see."

As I explained the situation with more clarity, Alica-san held a stern expression while Minoa-san nodded sympathetically. It made me wonder at how my sudden disappearance was being handled back home, I probably caused quite a commotion vanishing all of a sudden like that. ... I'm so very sorry, Director.

"Well, your past life is in the past now. It would be best to keep moving forwards, as this is your life now."

“Yes, I know. Really, I’m sorry.”

I hardly heard the small sigh from Minoa-san, as I considered what was expected of me. This chest I have now, I had no choice really but to get used to it. As I take a moment to myself, Alica-san heads over to the opposite wall. I never noticed the window there. She pulled aside the curtain, which draped across the wall down to the floor, to reveal a glass window on the other side. However, blocking the way to the glass was a set of shutters, almost like a door, which let only minimal light into the room between the gaps. That might be why the room could get so dark. ((Nothing until now said “gilded cage” quite like this yet.))

“Seiren-sama, if it might please you, come check this out. It even seems to be good weather today.”

“Oh? Really?”

After pulling open the shutters and glass window, clear blue sky flooded the newly revealed space. To put it in perspective, this room was on the second floor. I didn’t even notice such myself until now, because the bath I went to yesterday was also on the same floor.

“Wow!!!”

I inadvertently voiced my opinion of the view before me. Far off in the distance was a mountain range, with a forest of trees layered out before it. I could see some spots of the woods had unnatural clearings, with what looked sorta like cabin roofs peeking out from the top. It was probably a village or such. Since I grew up in the city, this countryside feeling was also unfamiliar, another

way it was such a different world. Seriously, looking out at this spread of crude countryside gave a convincing presentation of being a different world entirely. What else was new out there? Clearly, it wasn't just my chest that was something to get used to around here.

"This view outside is a lot to take in all at once."

"Oh, is this your first time seeing such?"

"Well, I spent all yesterday only checking out the inside of this mansion."

I answered Alica-san's question while still scanning the outdoors. This really was the first opportunity I had for such a view. In consideration of such, Alica-san offered "If you wish, I could guide you around the garden today?" It made me curious about what sort of "Garden" this place would have.

"Really?"

Glancing downwards from the window, I wondered if the garden could be seen from here.

"Hmm.."

As I shifted my view downwards, I noticed a young man below. He was slightly younger than me, probably around 14 or 15 years old. Trying my best to look at him, I noticed he had sleek black hair. I'm not sure exactly, as it is hard to determine from so far away, but I suspect he was around my height. The pants he wore were a darkened slate of beige, and he appeared to be working with a wooden sword. The sword looked a lot more like a western-styled sword,

instead of a more familiar Japanese sword. Considering his posture and the way he was holding it, I wondered if he was enduring sword practice. While watching him attentively, I decided to call out to him.

“Good morning! How are you doing today?”

“.....”

He remained silent and ever vigilante, so I decided to leave him be. I was sorta worried if I did something wrong there. I was curious, who was that guy. Turning around to Alica-san, I noticed she had her hand to her cheek, as if she was contemplating something.

“That Saryuu-sama, so early in the morning.” “Saryuu..?”

It means Alica-san knew this guy. Minoa-san took that opportunity to show up from behind us.

“... Alica, did you not yet explain? Although, for Seiren-sama to be suddenly interested in him..”

“Huh, wait, what?”

Even Alica-sama seems startled by Minoa-san’s sudden arrival. Yeah, I’m not sure what I was doing either.

“Oh, nevermind, I thought for a moment that you were the master or madam or Yuzuruha-san.”

“Geez.”

Minoa-san shrugged in disappointment. It’s the best way I could describe how she appeared, even if it doesn’t give merit to the impression she gave. Usually, unlike Alica-san or Oriza-san, Minoa-san came across as a sort of motherly figure.

“The guy you saw outside is Saryuu Shiya, Seiren-sama’s younger brother. As I recall, he turned 14 this year.”

“... younger brother?”

Inadvertently, I was left visibly shocked. I never expected to have a younger brother too. It came up completely unexpectedly, finding out that I have even more to the family I never knew I had. Then again, awkwardly enough, I was gone for 18 years, it is entirely possible to have had a brother added to the family while I was away. But in the orphanage, I got used to thinking of my peers as my siblings. This was something different completely.

“I... I have a brother?”

“Well, specifically, he’s your brother-in-law.”

Minoa-san added a couple of additional words that just made things even more complicated. Specifically, that ‘in-law’ part? ((Although, the use of ‘in-law’ here doesn’t exactly match the English cultural meaning. Basically, they are closer to cousins than siblings.))

“Oh, so he’s more like adopted?”

“Correct. Following the branches of the Shiya Family, he comes from a distant relative.”

Alica-san’s information was really convincing, considering what she saw of the guy earlier. Yes, it was something understandable of such a daimio family. It means he wasn’t exactly considered a pure noble either. He wouldn’t have inherited much sway within the family. I wonder if I was the only actual heir for the family, their daughter. And I was disappeared after only one month of being born... I amazed myself, no longer feeling strange about being brought back here as their daughter.

That’s just how things are.

“So ... all things considered, that still makes me the only heir, then.”

“That may be so, but there is something else to consider.”

Minoa-san inclined her head in consideration. I considered what else could be a problem, wondering if there was an issue with the heir being gone for so long could have caused more than just parents frantic to find her. However..

“Well, consider Saryuu, and what he’s had to go through. When his parents are so worried about the daughter who is gone, no one knowing if she is alive or dead...”

Oh no. I had no idea what to say about that. I worry about what sort of impression that has left him with now. To have parents more worried about the

daughter who was gone than the son who was still there, he probably felt neglected and loved less as a result. It wouldn't have helped that he knew he wasn't a heir either. I had to empathise with him though, considering how I grew up as an unofficial son of the Director, who still feels like my father even now. I might have come from another world, and I might be a daughter here, but there I was like a son. Still, even considering the sort of father-son relationship I had, it was never seen that way from the outside. It was an orphanage, after all. Having seen everything play out very similar back then, I was very familiar with how he might feel.

"I can understand how he might have been lonely, Saryuu. I got to see what it was like growing up as a child without complete parents myself."

"You were lonely, then?"

"I really didn't completely understand what it was like to be a part of a family. As a child, it was a fact which was sometimes difficult to endure."

"Oh..."

.. Frustratingly, I wasn't completely satisfied with how I explained myself. I probably could have phrased that better. Well, to have found I have a brother, and that I'm a sister, though I still feel like I should be a brother instead. It's not exactly something I have control over, though. At the very least, I want to talk with my brother and help him out. I don't know, I had managed to stay strong until now, but it is probably likely that facing him for such might turn out to be rather scary.

With that, it was time to get dressed for the day. The bra was still difficult for me to put on, mostly the part where I had to tie the string in the back. Today's

outfit was similar to the light blue dress yesterday, but instead was a pale yellow dress. The adorned patterns of the dress made it look really cute, and somehow I'm wearing it. Minoa-san took a moment to make an additional request.

"Meanwhile, Seiren-sama, would you like to have some breakfast?"

"Wait, breakfast?"

I considered my reply. Last night, I had dinner in this very room. Minoa-san was probably already considering such herself. I considered carefully if I should eat alone again today.

"I think this time I would rather go and eat with the others, if that is alright."

"Of course. This will surely please the master and madam."

Nervously facing Minoa-san as I made my request, she responded laughing, to my relief.

Chapter 8 - Family Gathering, and Somehow Included

I wiped my face with a steaming hot washcloth Minoa-san brought me, as Alica-san carefully trimmed my hair so that I was ready to be presented to my parents. My hair had grown considerably longer than how I had kept it in the other world, as a guy, but hearing that my hair now was called “cute”, I couldn’t help but smile.

“Seiren-sama, is there anything else I can help you with?”

“Oh, no, I’m good.”

After being called cute like that, having been caught fidgeting strangely, I made sure to let Alica-san know not to worry. After all, it should be excusable considering her extra effort for such a significant degree of special cosmetic preparation, of course, right? ((Extra BS was added to this BS excuse, to make sure the magnitude of BS for this excuse was not lost in translation...)) Considering it though, I did really easily become very happy simply by being called cute, it shows how well I’ve been able to adapt. ((..because BS excuse didn’t even convince her.)) I guess even though I grew up as a guy, I did get used to being seen as girly sometimes at school. I did always have that very feminine face, even as a guy, and the fact I had an interest in plants and sowing only furthered such feminine impressions.

“How big is the dining hall?”

“It is on the first floor. Other than us, most likely only be Saryuu-sama there when we arrive.”

“Oh, my brother is there too? That should be fine.”

“Breakfast should currently be served, so we should get going.”

“Oh! Hopefully things will work fine with my brother, I don’t want to make things awkward for everyone here. I’ll be careful.”

The two of us talk as we start heading down the stairs. Since my dress is rather long, I pinch a segment of it and carry it as I walk, so that I won’t trip on it. Actually, thinking about it, its strange that I so instinctively held the dress like this, though I was also scary not being able to see my feet while walking down the stairs, with the dress clinging so annoyingly to my legs. My shoes... those got sorta awkward too, I don’t know how girls could regularly walk around in such high heels. It was scary going down the stairs in these shoes, I firmly gripped the handrail on the way down in fear of falling down the stairs. At least my hands felt firm with such a good sturdy handrail, made of shiny thick black wood. Was the house even that old, or was it just that the Shiya Family has a lot of history? I wonder..

Eventually, I arrived at the entrance of the dining hall. Marking its entrance were a set of giant double doors, waiting to be opened. The dining hall was large, assuredly, but even the doors at its entrance were impressively large. You could probably fit two or three floors of my previous school into this dining hall. I made my way to the doors, to enter such a massive dinning hall. Before the doors, I was greeted by Yuzuruha-san. Really, this was absolutely amazing. It made me doubt my decision to miss out on this last night, to just eat dinner in my room. Well, true, I did need time before facing my parents, there was that to consider.. which I will have to face this morning. No more excuses.

“Seiran-sama, good morning.”

“Oh! Yuzuruha-san, good morning.”

“Please come inside, everyone has been waiting for you.”

True, I should try my best, considering Yuzuruha-san is greeting me so gladly. As Yuzuruha-san opened the great doors, I could smell delicious food coming from the other side. It was even just a breakfast, it was incredible the quality of food. Once inside, Alica-san was there to guide me to the middle of the room, where there was a surprising small table, considering the size of the room at least. While still being bigger than I was used to, having such a gigantic room contain such a smaller table was funny in its own way. Still, it was sufficiently decorated, with massive shelves adorning the walls, seemingly encasing the table within. As my gaze eventually returned to the table once again, it settled on my father sitting in the chair closest to the entrance, who I had only met briefly yesterday. Beside him was my mother, sitting in the next seat over from the entrance. Then, in the next seat over from my mother was a young boy, the same one I had seen earlier. Actually, I have yet to be formally introduced to Saryuu so far. In consideration of such, I started with greeting my parents. I bowed my head to them, carefully considering the right words to say.

“Good morning... Dad, Mom.”

As I finally try to speak, I surprisingly pull it off nicely. Actually, considering it carefully, it might have been more appropriate to have used more formal names for my parents, but I was slow to think of that. ((She actually starts using -sama at the end of the names, but I'll be handling it slightly differently in english)).

“Oh, good morning Seiren. Did you sleep well last night?”

“I did.”

After my first blunder, my second response was much more nervous. But looking closely at father, I can see that even his face also has that familiar effeminate fragment. During my moment of hesitation, Minoa-san came up behind me, with a “I’m glad you are getting along with the master” secretly whispered to me. Well, truthfully, I was happy not only to see my father, but also my mother. This was very clear to me, standing before their chairs. I could honestly feel myself radiating happiness, even if this was still kinda hard.

“Good morning, Seiren. The outfit I chose for you seems to match your hair wonderfully.”

“Oh, really? Thank you.”

It seems mother was the one who picked my outfit. Well, it certainly wouldn’t have been father, but I generally suspected it might have been one of the maids who picked such. I guess not... Mother probably has been dreaming of when she could put her daughter in a dress like this. Certainly, being a guy, she wouldn’t have been able to do the same with Saryuu. Considering such, I became worried for my future. After all, it seems clear I should expect more frills and elegance in the future. I would need to stay strong. Somehow pulling out my best smile again, mother returned the same in kind. Clasp together my hands in conclusive fulfilment, I finally turn to my brother. Saryuu-kun... it was time to face this delicate issue, finally. Really, I wasn’t sure how much he would listen to what I have to say, considering I just suddenly sprung up in his life as his sister and all.

“Oh, I should make sure to introduce you two properly. Seiren. Saryuu.”

“Thank you, mother.”

My brother stood up when his name was called, standing slightly taller than me and ever so attentive. Looking closely, he still had a smidgen of childishness left to his face, but he still managed to look smart. Oh, he was probably also smart intellectually as well. He look very established, like the proper heir of a rich family would be expected to look. He wore a shirt that properly matched his pants, the same set he was wearing earlier. He wore a loop tie, which tied together at the top firmly like a round broach. He looked rather fit, especially for being only 14 years old as I was told earlier, while still having some refinement to his physique. All things considered, he will probably grow up with an amazing physique. Under mother's compulsion, Saryuu approaches me much closer. Alica-san had stepped away from me to make sure I wasn't crowded, leaving me face to face with my brother suddenly for the first time.

“Saryuu here is your brother. Saryuu, Seiren here is your sister. You two should properly say hello to each other.”

“Uh.. greetings, Seiren-sama. My name is Saryuu, it is my honour to finally meet you.”

“Oh yes, it is wonderful to finally meet you. I'm Seiren.... I look forward seeing you more in the future.”

I was as shy as a cat, as I just tried to speak naturally. I tried hard to remember the words, so that I wouldn't make any mistakes. Saryuu himself was surprised with my careful phrasing, his wide eyes betraying his surprise.

“Si...sister?” ((For those familiar, this was specifically “Ne..ne-sama?”))

“Did I mess up? I’m still not used to speaking like this.”

I answered his queried look with a wry smile. Saryuu then switched back to a frown, restoring that serious expression of his.

“You don’t exactly have the disposition befitting of one from the Shiya family.”

“I’m sorry for such. I only learned that I was a daughter of the Shiya family yesterday.”

“.....”

With such, my brother’s face vented his frustration, as he furrowed his eyebrows and had his hands defiantly to his sides. Even if he refuses to believe I’m a daughter of the family, it won’t change anything. Well, this is probably his own way of adjusting to growing up in this family as the younger one. The biggest reason I am unaware of how to handle myself properly here is because I grew up as a guy.

“Well, I’m just me so we shouldn’t worry about it.”

“Well, Seirun, that’s not exactly how things work around here.”

“I’ve not had much chance to adjust. Mother is aware of some of my circumstances.”

I suspected my brother didn't know how my life was before here at least, and shrugged that concern off mother's way. My parents should know by now that I used to be a guy. I knew I had to be cautious, this wasn't the sort of thing that people would consider easily. Mother seemed to catch on to such concerns, as she hastened to change the topic. Father just looked at me quietly, letting the silence freeze over. Hopefully you are okay, father.

"Okay, that will be enough. Come on, let's have some breakfast. For the first time ever, the entire family will be eating together."

"Okay."

"... Alright."

As inspired by mother, I sit in the seat opposite her. Saryuu is still glaring at me in frustration, but also returns to his seat. Once my brother was finally seated, the Shiya Family breakfast begun.

Chapter 9 - Keeping Relaxed, while Eating Breakfast

Bread and soup, a salad of sauteed fish, breakfast wasn't exactly what I would have expected, but I enjoyed it anyway. Well, I really wouldn't have expected to have eaten such in the morning. Otherwise, it seems I will have to be careful around Saryuu. At this point, we weren't even making eye contact anymore. I know, to him I probably seem like a unusual girl... but that's because I used to be a guy. This was still something my brother did not know, I would have to deal with that later. I'm sorry.

Putting matters between Saryuu and I aside for now, the tea we got after breakfast somehow smelled different compared to what we had yesterday. I'm not sure what kind of tea it is exactly, but it was very clear that this was a very different type of tea, even to me.

"Oh, Seiren. Is anything wrong?"

"Oh, no. I was just thinking that this tea has a different aroma than the one yesterday. I think both are nice."

While I was carefully contemplating my tea, it seems mother wanted to know what I was thinking about. I should be more aware of my reactions going forward. Still, this tea is really nice, such a pleasant aroma. It was vaguely similar to Chai, calming, but with a strong aroma. I certainly wasn't about to be picky, at the orphanage we often didn't have such luxuries. Because of such, I wouldn't usually get to drink such a tea. Director, he probably just couldn't afford it. As mother smiled happily, I wondered if the tea was also mother's attempt at trying to bring me comfort. Smiling in return, I turned to father who had a sour look on his face, as he was in the midst of drinking tea himself.

“Yes, I really like this. Well, I used to drink a lot of green tea, it was my favourite.”

“Oh really... Honestly I’m not familiar with such.”

“Oh, and please pass on my compliments to the chef for this wonderful breakfast. Also, could I please have some plain hot water?”

“.... Sure.”

At this, mother replied to me plainly with a smile, as father had a stern and determined expression. Noticing I got carried away with the tea, I muttered my own “sorry” quietly. Still, mother must be so strong to take all of this so casually. Father probably too, though I really don’t know what he was thinking. He just looked stern, which did suit his noble status. He reminded me of the Director, who also had a good personality that betrayed a subtle kindness.

... I did enjoy having some plain hot water after eating. It reminded me of having a cup of hot water after eating rice back at the orphanage, which was good for clearing up the sticky feeling of the rice grains. The water I got was a bit too scalding for me, but I was too impatient to wait before drinking it.

“Thank you for the lovely meal. It was delicious.”

After we had finished eating, Minoa-san reappeared suddenly to help me up from the table. Considering the large apron she was wearing, she was probably in the kitchen. I gave her my “Thank you” as she bowed deeply in reply. Really, I wonder about this family’s serving staff. A little while ago I learned that there

was a chef here, so then he would have been responsible for a meal this BIG, impressive.

“... Umm, sister Seiren-sama.”

“Hmm?”

As I went to leave the dinning hall, I discovered Saryuu following me. Like myself, he had his own maid with him. Considering this young man, it made me wonder what Oryza-san was doing on her day off.

“What is it, Saryuu?”

“... Earlier, I was a bit overzealous there. I’m sorry.”

“Earlier?”

“When I was saying that you weren’t fit to be part of the Shirya family.”

Woah! I didn’t expect this, he even lowered his head while saying such. The maid behind him was watching such proceedings, and upon suddenly noticing such, ended up also bowing in the same way with a light sigh. Oh, Saryuu must have been asked to do such by his maid. I haven’t had much experience yet being a woman, so I’m glad to have the support of maids with so much experience. Even Oriza-san is nice, although she is very quick to speak her mind. Yeah, she can sometimes be too honest.

“It’s alright. Honestly, I still need to work on adjusting to my new home.”

“Ah, yes.”

With my reply, my brother visibly expressed his relief. With a sigh, which I could even hear from here, I guess he was a bit nervous. Hmm, this might be a sign of some potential agreement we could reach in the future. First, I would need to be a “proper daughter of the family”, though that would take some time.

“Saryuu”

“Oh, yes. What is it, sis-sama?” ((He’s still formally using “ane-sama”, and I’m not feeling this is being properly expressed with just “sister”. Solution, invent new English hybrid word.))

“Umm, I’m really not yet accustomed to this kind of family. So then, if I have any problems adjusting in the future, I might need a bit of help.”

“Oh... really?”

Clearly, this was awkward for both of us. But honestly, I really wanted to clear this up. Really, it was something that deeply worried me. To try and prevent anymore mistakes, I made sure to be cautious.

“Oh well, I thought it would be proper for me to ask you such. Was it too much for me to ask for?”

“Well, I’ll think about it.”

While I was rethinking if I had gone too far, Saryuu responded instead, shyly rubbing his back. True, technically I only mentioned the idea, I didn't actually directly ask him to help me. He might think differently about it, but that couldn't be helped.

"Now, if you will excuse me."

"Oh, sure. Take care."

Somehow, things between Saryuu and I have turned out a bit better, at least I hoped so. At least, as Saryuu's older sister, I should try to put a bit more attention into being a "refined woman", however that was easier said than done. You know, I wonder if I'm even capable of being that much of a woman. I glanced around as I consider such. Well, I can't forget that I have people here to help me out already, such as my maids, as well as Yuzuruha-san. ((Am I the only one here concerned that she doesn't even consider her parents as applicable help, only the maids?))

Arriving back in my room, I settled onto the sofa. Phew, it seems I was still a bit nervous about earlier, I wasn't really aware of such until that point. Alica-san was already waiting for me in the back of the room, and said to me "welcome back" as we laughed. Truly, such did help me to relax. After that bit of relief, I started to wonder where the other two maids had gone off to after breakfast.

"Honestly, I haven't seen you for a while now. I don't even know what you two have been up to."

"Well, we made sure to clean the room and bed sheets after Seiren-sama left, then made sure to have our own breakfast in the staff room."

“I made sure to return to this room after breakfast, to make sure Seiren-sama’s bed was made properly in case she wanted to rest.”

“I see, I’m very sorry. I guess you two still had work to take care of while I was eating.”

... to clean up the room like this and still have time for breakfast. These maids, that would be a lot to do in so little time. Speaking of time, I wonder if there are clocks here. Searching around the room quickly, I found a clock had been mounted on one of the walls which I hadn’t noticed earlier. It looked like one of those old pendulum clocks, but it was completely silent. It also displayed unfamiliar characters on its face, so it wasn’t like one of the analogue clocks that I was used to. Considering the arms of the clock and what that would mean on a normal clock, the clock claims it is just after 9 o’clock. I wasn’t exactly certain due to not having checked the clock before breakfast, being only able to really gauge from the sun I saw outside earlier this morning, I would hazard a guess that we were in the dining hall for just over an hour.well, I wasn’t perfectly certain about that either. Well, at least I knew it was still early in the morning. There would be a lot of time before lunch. Well then.

“Wait a minute, is this also what happened last night after I went to sleep? Did you wait until then to eat, too?”

“Don’t worry, I’ve long gotten accustomed to this sort of routine.”

“Wow..”

As Minoa-san answered with a shrug, I started feeling terribly sorry for them. That they have had to adjust to this sort of thing, to have to naturally work with

this routine. In other words... If they take too long to complete their maid tasks, they won't have time to sleep or eat. It felt self-centered being able to do everything so leisurely, while having staff working this hard for me. They even made sure my bed was cleaned and tended to while I was casually talking with everyone in the dining hall.

"Well... I think I would like to have time to eat with you guys too, at least occasionally. So long as you guys aren't overly rushed with your other responsibilities."

"I'm very sorry."

"Please do not trouble yourself over worrying so much about us, Seiren-sama."

Alica-san gave a gentle apologetic smile, while Minoa-san clarified that fulfilling such a request wouldn't likely be possible. It was saddening, truthfully. I guess.. I would have to accept such limitations. Well, at least I tried. I should actually consider my life as a young lady, I'm not even familiar with my own schedule. I don't ever know if I go to school or something. I will simply have to try my best, and I know Alica-san has my back. Honestly, Minoa-san isn't bad to have around, and Alica-san is good at listening to people.

"Umm, Alica-san. I'm uncertain if there are any tasks expected of me, today."

"No, not really. The mistress has told us that you're expected to take things at your own leisure, at least for a while."

"... I see."

In other words, I can just do whatever. Even saying such, I hardly know anything about this mansion or the world outside it.

I just don't know what to do. Hmm.

“Okay. Alica-san, you offered earlier this morning to show me around the garden. So I wonder, maybe you might have time to guide me around the entire mansion. I want to learn my way around here.”

If I want to learn something, I just need to ask.

Fortunately it seems Alica-san remembered that incident earlier, and nodded as she broke into laughter.

“Of course. Seiren-sama is quite unfamiliar with the mansion, after all.”

“It will also be a good opportunity for you to meet the rest of the staff. I will go with you today.”

Minoa-san answered with a curt nod. Alright, now to explore the mansion. Well, I doubt I could memorise all of it.

Unexpectedly just after leaving the room, I was reminded of the talisman pouch. Because of everything else that was going on, it had been forgotten in the depths of my mind. I wonder, what happened to it.

“.... Oh, Alica-san, Minoa-san. Do you know what happened to the talisman

pouch I had?”

“Talisman pouch?”

“Well, it was that tiny handmade pouch I came with. It might have been a little shabby, but I don’t know where it has gone now.”

I drew an imaginary square in the air with my fingers, to help the two of them understand. Considering I made that pouch myself, I liked it even if it was shabby. As I remember it, soon as I was pulled to this world, mother had me pull it out to show her what was inside it. Goodness, what did I do with it after that... right, it was in the back pocket of my clothes. Oh, I wonder what happened to my old clothes too.

“Oh, I forget what happened to it.”

While contemplating all of this, Alica-san ran back towards the bedroom. Not long after, she hurried back with a small familiarly-shabby handmade talisman. Alica-san told me where it was being kept, while holding it out to me in the cusp of her palms.

“I found this while washing the clothes you were wearing yesterday, within one of the pockets. I made sure to set it aside, just in case.”

“Thank you! Awesome!”

I accepted the talisman offered by Alica-san, hugging it tightly in relief. Checking carefully, I notice from its apparent flatness that it seemed there was nothing in the bag. I took a moment to recall the ring that should have been

inside, the tiny ring that would not fit on a baby's finger. I unravel the knot that tied the top of the bag. In desperation, I open the bag and turn it upside down into my palm. Falling from the pouch and landing in the palm of my hand, was a cute ring holding a blue gem, to my great relief.

"Good, it was still inside. Oh thank goodness. Hmm..."

"Oh, that is a very pretty ring."

"I learned that, when I was born, my parents had given it to me as a gift."

Alica-san inspected the ring, as I described its origins. With eyes widening along with her surprised "Oh..", she continued to inspect the ring along with Minoa-san, who herself was tilting forwards her neck slightly for a better look.

"You know, I might as well put this on now. In the other world, it just stayed in the pouch. The person who raised me in the that world said that I should make sure to take good care of it, so I worked hard to make the pouch. I tried my best to take good care of it."

"That's amazing. To have taken such good care of it, it must have been very important to you."

Minoa-san told me such, with a slight smile on her face. Yes, I knew I had to cherish it. It was a gift from father and mother, was even presented to me by director back in the other world. It felt as if, through this ring, I was cherished in return.

Chapter 10: Abundant Learning, during a Castle Tour

①

Minoa-san would be available to give me a guided tour of the castle, but would need a quick ten minutes to prepare. Alica-san smiled while telling me “Please feel free to take your time with Minoa”, as she did have another task to attend to at the time. Having to work so hard, having all this work to do as my exclusive maids, it looked difficult being such a maid.

“Please do not be so concerned about us, Seiren-sama.”

Hearing my name called suddenly, I stopped startled. Turning around, I saw Minoa-san had just returned recently and was now ready to guide me around.

“What? Oh, was it something I said?”

“No, I could just tell by the look on your face, Seiren-sama.”

“Oh, I see.”

Minoa-san tried to relieve my notable stress, noticing my slightly troubled frown. Well, I guess my expression was really easy to read. Either that, or Minoa-san was just that good at reading people. That seemed rather remarkable, having almost telepathic powers.

“Alica is taking care of some work for Seiren-sama, which is part of her job as Seiren-sama’s exclusive maid. So, please do not worry so much, Seiren-sama.”

Minoa-san tried to comfort me, explaining that Alica-san was only doing her regular job. Even so, it wouldn't be like me to not worry about being such an imposition.

“... ah, thank you.”

“Then let's get going.”

Arriving at the bottom of the stairs as we talked, we arrived at the main entrance. There were other maids present, who bowed as I arrived. They were carrying brooms and cleaning rags, working to clean up everything. They looked like they were working hard. Anyway, it seems the tour will begin from the entrance of the first floor. Usually this would be where someone would first arrive, so this might be a normal place to start. The entrance hall was also huge. I didn't get much opportunity to check out much on this floor earlier, so I wanted to get a good look.

The floor tiling was made of huge stones. It was probably cleaned regularly, as it looked amazing. There were huge arabesque hung in the central portion of the hall, woven to match the same pattern as the thinner carpet that came from the main doors. The carpet didn't seem as practical as would be normal, it didn't look like the sort of thing to wipe shoes on. Doing so would seem selfish. Symmetrically designed, there were stairs that circled up from both sides of the hall, which included the wing I was staying in. It was on the right-hand side of the railing corridor that connected both sides of the stairs on the second floor, on the opposite side of the hall from the main doors. Beyond the stairs, on the first floor, was a plain door hiding behind the stairs. There was even a huge potted plant which seemed to be trying to further hide the door. The areas not hidden by potted plants held a variety of decorated paintings. These portraits, they probably represented my ancestors. These pictures of nobility were

painted, and then further decorated. Further behind the stairs was a hallway, with the right side leading to the door going to the dining hall I had breakfast in. The other direction would lead to another room, I guess. Minoa-san gave a quick cough, before explaining such details.

“This entrance hall is approximately the centre of the Shiya family castle, with the door leading to the courtyard outside. In the back of the hall, across from the dining hall, is the castle’s grand hall.”

“Grand hall?”

“It is where we would gather guests, in the event of a party. If we were to have a large number of guests over, we would open the doors to that hall.”

“I see.”

So then that would mean the door on the other side of the dinning hall then leads to the grand hall, like a sort of banquet hall. That grand hall, I wonder, might it be even bigger than this entrance hall? No way, it couldn’t be that big. But considering such, the even the entrance hall is this big. I worried about how much time it will take to go over everything.. oh well.

“Another thing I was wondering, what about these? All of these pictures along the walls..”

“They were here before I started working here. I believe they are portraits of your ancestors from long ago.”

“My ancestors. So one of these might be someone like my hiijiji-chan or

something.”

“Yes.”

Looking along the hall, at least three generations of my family were represented here. Actually, I don’t know if these pictures are older than that. So then, their only daughter disappeared suddenly, Saryuu was adopted into the proper family because of the need of a heir. They did still continue looking for their daughter, and found her again after she had turned 18.

In other words, I have some very foolish parents. I will need to stay strong. I should be fine, I just need to keep going forwards. I’m going to have to become a proper heir to the family, after all.

Unexpectedly, I heard a muffled crash suddenly. Lost in thought at the time, I was abruptly pulled back to reality. That sound... I think it came from within the door hidden at the bottom of the stairs. I wonder if someone was inside. Who? I had no idea, I would have to ask first.

“Umm, Minoa-san.”

“Yes?”

“The door hiding at the bottom of the stairs, what’s in there?”

“...”

Oh no! Stopping for a moment, it looked like Minoa-san had become upset all

of a sudden. Oops, did I just step on a landmine?

“That door, it leads to the staff room. It is not a place for Seiren-sama to visit.”

After a distressing moment, Minoa-san returned back to her regular expressionless self, to my great relief. So then earlier, that was the sound of staff busy at work, on the other side of the door. Still, it was something I would have liked to see myself.

“Oh, but..”

“I’m not familiar with the sort of lifestyle Seiren-sama had, while growing up. But here, there exists a significant difference between Seiren-sama of the Shiya Family, and ordinary people. Please, make sure you remember this.”

“.....”

Minoa-san scolded me with such, locking eyes with me using a stern gaze.

Convincingly, I was left with nothing to dispute her. It is clear this world has such a distinct societal hierarchy which separated people. That’s just how things worked here, Minoa-san made that completely clear to me, still... the other world, she didn’t know how difficult things were there.

The tension seemed to settle. I thought so at least, because at least Minoa-san’s expression lightened again. She turned her head lightly, implying that we should just continue the tour.

“... would you like to continue to see more of the castle?”

“Oh, right. Sorry... If you would please.”

I apologised promptly, and hurried to follow Minoa-san. Really, to be so completely distracted, I was very sorry.

Minoa-san slowly opened the door leading to the grand hall. Even considering how big the entrance hall was, the grand hall was much bigger. The grand hall, it was indeed grandiose. The stone tiles of the floor were much brighter, but had the same pattern as the entrance hall. Descending from the undeniably extravagant ceiling, were an expanse of chandeliers of different sizes. The pale marble-colored wall was also covered with a further expanse of new paintings like before. Deep in the back was a set of thick, red curtains. Because of how it was displayed, it felt like the curtains before some type of stage. In the corner of the room was two sets of doors, the first being considerably more plain than the other. It was probably another staff room. Next to the door, laid what look like another one of the same potted plants we saw earlier. Across the room were various maids who were cleaning the room, such as cleaning the floor with a large mop. There were maids who were also tending to the pillars scattered across the hall, and others were going over the frames of the pictures carefully. One of the maids rushing to complete work nearby stopped momentarily, offering a quick bow. Well then, I was left speechless in wonderment at seeing this.

“Oh, I’m so sorry. Please continue cleaning, I only came here to look around.”

“Of course, excuse me.”

After saying such, the maid turned back to resume her work. It occurred to

me that what Minoa-san said earlier was true, my status here does have a visible affect.

“This is the grand hall. It does not see very much use, mostly for cleaning as you can see.”

“Well it would be much harder to work with, if it wasn’t regularly cleaned. Though it is such a big room.”

“That is true.”

To think this room would be used for a party. It’s amazing, to have so much space devoted to such. There is so much to this grand hall, way more than what I was remembered it was back at the orphanage. It might have only been yesterday, but the other world has gone so far away now that I don’t remember most of the details anymore.

After we left the grand hall, Minoa-san started heading out towards the dining hall. Because I already saw it this morning, I wondered if there was any value in going there. Was I to go over there now, to see it being cleaned as well?

“In the back of this corridor is the dining hall, which is where you had your breakfast this morning. It is the place where your family always eats their meals.”

“My family? In a room this big? I wonder if it was always like that.”

Considering my family, and excluding the staff, there was only the four of us,

father, mother, Saryuu, and I. It was absolutely too much space for just four people. And considering even my ancestors, they would have eaten in this room as a family too, so it's always been like this.

"I'm not certain if this has always been like this. Oh maybe, if danna-sama or oku-sama have friends or relatives over, they might decide to have them eat here too."

"It's just, this seems too spread out."

That might make sense. If there are a few guests that show up, there would easily be room for everyone to eat together. It's just such a big hall, it feels like a waste. The orphanage had such a different occupancy. In the single room, with a single table, everyone had to squeeze tightly together. There was even quite a scramble over portions of curry. Things were much different here, maybe even the prayers before meals, "We give thanks for these blessings from the heavens and the earth" if I recall right.... I wonder if that's changed too. While considering such details, Minoa-san turned over to face me. Oh, and she had the same stern expression that she had earlier.

"In the back of the dining hall is the kitchen area. Because that is another staff area, you should not go inside."

".... I know. The same as before. I'm sorry."

I accept docilely. I kinda wanted to dispute this with Minoa-san, but first I wanted to finish exploring the castle. Still, it was important to know where I was expected not to go.

“Oh, and what is that over there next to the kitchen?”

“Ah, yes. Further back behind the kitchen is the food pantry.”

I asked Minoa-san another question, quickly getting a reply. Ah, that was good to know too. So behind the dining room was the kitchen, with the pantry even further back. That sort of setup kinda made sense. Considering this world probably doesn't have a refrigerator, it would have to routinely cycle its food stock. At least, unless it was pickled or dried foods. Hmm? There, I could faintly see it deeper in the back.

“I can hardly see it, only faintly, but might the food pantry have a door going outside?”

“It does. I'm impressed you were able to see such.”

Oh, it seems I was correct. Also, Minoa-san seemed happy I noticed.

“That door is important, it makes carrying food inside easier.”

“Considering it is just us four, I hope such also includes food for the staff here. Things seem hard every day for you all.”

“It's just something we're used to.”

Offering a reply without much comfort, Minoa-san nodded off any signs of caring. I wondered, maybe Minoa-san just felt she was too powerless to change anything?

Chapter 11: Abundant Learning, during a Castle Tour

②

Minoa-san's tour continued, moving up to the second floor. Honestly, I think this hand-railing is important. If elderly people were involved, it would be absolutely necessary. We ascended the stairs to the right side of the main entrance, which went into the wing with my room.

Across from my room was the bath, but the entrance to that room was all the way around from the other side. More than likely, this was so moisture didn't accumulate on this side. Between my room and the bath was another door, which looked like it was a linen closet. The door was so discreet, I never noticed it before. It seems inside was an assortment of different styles of sheets sorted by season, but apparently was not a place where my family and I were expected to go into. Regardless, hearing such details did give me some relief, this world still has seasons. Last night I did notice that the main door of the furo was actually behind it, but I did not realise that there was also a toire on the other side of the hallway. The door looked symmetrically inverted from the bath's, which was probably also distantly placed as a countermeasure for odours. Still, I thought this setup seemed smart. Overall, that was the layout for my area in the right wing. I suspected the other wing would be designed similarly, it might even be symmetrically reflected. I would imagine that's such a design was very likely, but I would still need to confirm to be certain.

"What is over in the other wing?"

"That would be Saryuu-sama's wing. The layout and design is generally similar to Seiren-sama's wing."

“Nice.”

Wait a moment.. That means this set of bath and toilet rooms are all mine alone.

“I heard long ago this wing was setup as a children’s room, but was then renovated into a guest suite. It has since then been renovated again to what is here now.”

“Ah...”

I see, so this was originally a children’s room and then a guest room. It’s likely the children’s room was designed for me. It’s curious that this means the castle was only designed for two children, actually. It does make sense to have offered this wing to guests who were staying over, considering it wasn’t getting any other usage. Oh, so then that would mean that the linen closet even contained bedding for guests. It would sense. I wonder if it would be jammed full if I looked inside. I couldn’t check for myself, such closets are for the maids only. It’s probably for the best, I wouldn’t want to disturb it and then be buried in bedding.

While considering such, I looked towards the wing Saryuu was staying in. From what I could see, even the design of the walls on the other wing was very similar for my otōto. The hallways were otherwise the same, just his wing had a suit of armor decorating the corridor. After breakfast, as far as I knew, he probably went back to his room. Actually, that made me wonder, what might he be doing right now?

“I never did get to see Saryuu last night. I wonder, was he just too busy?”

“In the morning, he has lessons with his sensei, and then has sword practice in the afternoon. He goes to bed early in the evening, so that he can be up early in the morning for some self-training.”

“So earlier this morning, was that what I saw?”

I recalled the first time I saw my brother, while gazing out of the window. I was uncertain if my involvement interrupted his personal efforts, or if he was able to complete it properly. I hope things worked out well enough. I have noticed that my giri-no-otōto does like practicing with a sword. If such is true, then I wished him the best down this road with all of my ani-heart, or it would be by my ane-heart instead.. as that is what I have, here in this world. All things considered, this is a world of swords and magic. I’m still not completely used to such things, but I feel like I’ve adapted a bit. Actually, other than that fancy wizard guy from before, I’ve really not actually seen any magic. When I think of mahō, like with that fancy wizard guy from before, I think of stuff seen in games and anime. Still, it makes sense to take time to properly study the swords and magic of this world, like he did this morning.

“If Saryuu does studying in the morning, does that mean he’s doing such right now? That his teacher is working with him over there?”

“No, it is time for his sword training, he traveled to the home of his teacher.”

“Really?”

Minoa-san’s reply inadvertently blew my mind. The maids live here with us, but not a private teacher.

“... but aren’t I expected to stay near home?”

“Correct. The castle is quite a distance from the town, it would take a while to get there.”

“Come to think of it, when I was looking through the window, I think I saw some regular houses off in the distance. It looked hard to make that sort of trip, let alone daily.”

I recalled such details during Minoa-san’s reply. Indeed, that would be a long trip. I would suspect the distance would take about an hour or two by train, it was quite a distance away. I also really doubt the road was paved, and it is unlikely that there would be cars in this world, most likely they used a horse-drawn carriage. The trip would be really rough. While considering such, it reminded me of the scenery out of the window. The sparse gaps of the woods, dozens of simple houses snuggled tightly together. It probably was quite an impressive trip to make daily, considering what I saw. I still believed it would be much easier to have the teacher living in the castle, maybe in a neat little study or something. The director, I remember he used to always be there to help me with my homework.

“I see. But you made it seem he would not be gone for very long.”

“Correct. There is a small cottage, built by your family’s ancestors, not far from the castle. His teacher lives there with your oji-sama and two other people. We make sure to provide meals for them as well.”

“Oh, oji-san?”

That means the maid staff here also had to go over to the small cottage grandfather was at, to prepare food there. I still felt it would be better to hold such teaching at the castle, like in a study. No, actually, I still don't really understand what is involved in such lessons. I wouldn't know if it might be tougher properly learning such content here. It's true, without being able to properly grasp the nature of the studies, it would be difficult to understand how to best work with it. All that I know is the sort of studies I had at the orphanage, learning with a small group of guys and such. But meanwhile, regarding the cottage.. that was something I wanted to see.

"This afternoon, can we go there to have a look?"

"My shift will have ended, so we would have to ask Alica. Or how about we check with Yuzuruha-san, to see if it would be alright?"

"Ah, thank you very much."

Considering that I've never once stepped outside of the castle, Minoa-san's reply was very kindly received, I was excited to check it out. I was relieved, feeling tired of being stuck inside these walls. This brought up a new question, which I had just thought of.

"Hmm, actually, what is behind this wall...?"

I indicated the wall of the second floor, in the space there between the two halls below. However, other than a door there leading to the area inside, there was no windows to actually see inside. Hold on, I remembered being in that room once, if my memory wasn't wrong.

That was where I first hugged my mother.

“That would be for gishiki, that room.”

After noticing my inquiry, Minoa-san explained such.

“For rituals?”

“Yes, the area there has been dedicated for performing magical rituals.”

As she spoke those words, I repeated them in my head. Majutsu gishiki. To have a room dedicated for such, here in this castle. In other words, practicing magic is something that happens here in the castle. That night also, magic was involved in that room. The ritual that called me across worlds to this castle, right? When “I am a guy” ended, and I ended up being a girl. That room, it was the first place I saw in this world.

“I... I returned to this world in that room.”

“... Oh really?”

“... yeah..”

It was clear that Minoa-san never knew such details, she simply bowed her head.

The stairs going to the third floor were next to the doors of the ritual room,

standing sentinel from both sides of the door. The stairs also hid a table which could only be seen from the right angle, I was surprised to find it and didn't know what it was for. When I approached the stairs, Minoa-san gave me a sharp look. Becoming aware of such, I froze.

“The third floor is for danna-sama and oku-sama, you can't go up there without permission.”

“Oh I see.”

According to her words, I wouldn't be able to go up these stairs. Only the family head and his wife were allowed on that floor, usually. Even as their musume, apparently I still could not go up there without permission. I wondered on this, would that apply to even Yuzuruha-san regarding my room, that he would also need to obtain my permission to enter. The rules around here are very strict. It was like Minoa-san was explaining a little while ago, there can be a lot of difference in status between people.

My thoughts were cut off suddenly, hearing a very relaxed voice from the top of the stairs.

“Oh, Seiren, is that you?”

“Hmm? Okāsan?”

Looking up suddenly, I called out her name. Mother, who was escorted by a seasoned maid, was curiously looking downwards at me. It makes sense, she wouldn't know what I would be doing there, after all.

“I’ve been going on a tour of the castle. Since I just got here yesterday, I wanted to get to know this place.”

In that, I made sure to clarify what I was doing standing there. Mother took insight with a “Ahh”, and then gave a quick nod. In considering that said daughter just returned yesterday, she could appreciate such an idea.

“Oh, I know. Can you please meet me in my room. There is still some of the shortbread left to eat, the kind you tried yesterday.”

Whoa. Did I just hear right, that she wants me to meet her on the third floor? More than permission, this is rather an invitation. Additionally, I really would like more of the shortbread from yesterday. Yay!

“Oh, is that so? The shortbread was delicious, too.”

“Really, I’m glad that you think so. Now, come to my room and join me for tea. Minoa, please come join us as well.”

“I will.”

Watching these events unfold unexpectedly, Minoa-san was left agape with a look of amazement. She had just stopped me from wandering this way, I had to smile wryly.

Minoa-san seemed pretty adorable, in that moment.

“Okay. Let’s go upstairs together.”

“... but of course.”

Taking my words to heart, Minoa-san gave a deep bow, then lead the way slowly up the stairs.

Chapter 12: Abundant Learning, during a Castle Tour

③

We continued up the stairs arriving at the third floor. This was uncharted territory for me, and even Minoa-san looked as if she hasn't been one to frequent this area that much, as she glanced around frequently. Mother's room, it seems it was almost directly above mine, although the area up here was much larger. Well, it is the area where the head of the family's wife stayed, of course it would be huge.

"Now, please welcome inside."

"Ah, yes, please excuse my intrusion... oh wow."

I was cautious about being polite about this generous invitation, as mother was very kind for allowing us up here... when suddenly my face froze. No, my whole body went stiff for a moment. Essentially, this was an exceptionally girly room. Excessively more so than my own, it had flowers with laces fluttering around the room. No, more than that, this was just a sea of pure white lace, decorating the table and furniture, with a cute floral white pattern. The feet of the sofa were decorated to look like cat feet, and had frilly pink cushions sitting on it. The wallpaper was also a fancy flowery white pattern. Heck, there was even a series of stuffed animals lined up on the shelf, like it was part of a collection. I think it had quite an amazingly profound sense of... unity to this room, yeah. Honestly, I think it was a good thing that this sort of taste was not pressured onto me. I think the contents of the room would be too much for the taste of a lot of women, let alone for my experience as a guy. But considering that I was invited as a guest, it would be unreasonable to complain.

“Seiren-sama?”

“I don’t mind, Minoa. Welcome to both of you, to this amazing room.”

Minoa-san made sure to scold me for my visible reaction before I could manage to also properly hide such myself, while mother gently caressed my cheek with a wry smile. Well, she might simply be used to this sort of reaction. Still, it would be surprising to see a daughter owning such a room, let alone a mother. Oh well, I’ll just appreciate it simply on the basis that I got to enter such a private space.

“As you can see, I simply adore this sort of thing. Still, I suspect Seiren might have different tastes. I asked to make sure that your room was kept simple, I trust it was sufficiently to your tastes?”

“I’m sorry. Your request though was very appreciated.”

At that point, I bowed respectfully. Mother knew I used to be a guy, and thus thankfully seemed to understand my unfamiliarity with the chest I was granted. I was really spared because of this. If I had been left with a room like this, I might have fallen on my behind overwhelmed instantly after looking at it. While being grateful for such, mother gave us an “alright then” as she clasped her hands together.

“I plan to purchase a few samples of fabric and furniture from the merchants. I would like to know which of them is your favorite.”

“Oh, uh... okay.”

So this is what it is like to be rich. I considered turning down the offer, but instead nodded involuntarily, being scared of what would happen if I refused. No, I needed to make sure I got something I could live with.

First we settled onto the sofa, while the maid I saw earlier made sure to give my mother and I some tea that was prepared. Also the shortbread from yesterday, which was served with it.

“Have some tea. Would you like some sweets with it?”

“Thank you. Yes, that would be fine.”

After smiling happily to the maid, mother turned back to me. Speaking of such, this would be my first time meeting her maid.

“Seiren, here with me is Kaya. She sincerely welcomes you here as well.”

“Oh, Kaya-san is it? I’m Seiren, it’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“Just Kaya is fine. Seiren ojo-sama, I thank you for your consideration.”

Young lady..

... eheheh.. that made me feel dizzy for a moment. Kaya-san didn’t seem like she intended such to be cruel, but that “Young Lady” was suddenly quite overwhelming. Although, I guess I really should expect to be called such more often in the future. I needed to stay strong.

“Excuse me, Lady Seiren. Would you like some more sweets, there is also oshatō available.”

“... thank you very much.”

Yeah, ganbare-ore.

After that, we just sorta started rambling about nothing in particular. I still couldn't comprehend this collection of Mother's, these stuffed animals and the cushions and such. I was also concerned about potentially how much this collection would have cost, I wasn't certain but it was probably very expensive. Somehow, mother and I did not discuss my life as a guy before coming over here. This just wasn't the right time, to go over such a story. Still, when the conversation happened to drift into talking about how I came from another world in front of the two maids, Kaya-san seemed curiously anxious about something for a moment. Oba-chan, what in the world was that about?

“... Oh yes, Seiren. Of course, you would not have seen danna-sama's room, right?”

“Oh, yes.”

Danna-sama, as in her actual tō-san. Mother included, they seems to constantly be referring to so formally in front of other people. However, during the conversation with everyone this morning during breakfast, it was simply “anata”.

“Alright then. Considering the time, I think its time he took a break. Please let him know such.”

“Are you certain about that, oku-sama?”

“Are you claiming that he might be so busy, that he could not afford time with his daughter? Kaya.”

“No.”

Well, Kaya-san’s reply came very quickly. Hearing such, it seems to be a common understanding, even the tōshu should not have trouble finding some spare time for his daughter. Mother also seems to make sure of this. Understanding such, it somehow made me a bit happier. This was some of the first things I got to learn, about my parents.

So, with that, we could be on our way. Glancing at Minoa-san while realizing this, she instantly stood straight up, as if she was already expecting such. As she made her way over to where I was comfortably seated, I was offered a hand with which to help me stand up.

“Oh, and thank you for the tea and sweets. They were delicious.”

“Thank you for offering such delicious food, madam.”

“Glad you liked it. Perhaps, I should have more shortbread delivered to your room later. If you would like to eat more, of course.”

“Oh, thank you very much.”

Awesome, I will get to eat more later. Maybe I could even share some with Alica-san or Oriza-san, if they have spare time today. Slowly following after mother who had already left the room, I was admittedly a little appreciative. Kaya-san, waiting outside the door, encouraged me on my way.

“Lady Seiren..”

“Oh, sorry.”

She motioned as if she was hailing me, asking for us to hurry along to father’s room. However when I looked into her eyes, those returned a surprisingly cold expression. It was startling, such an direct and stern look that was vastly different than what she was using earlier, while mother was present.

“Madam might cherish the young lady, but I still believe that Saryuu is more deserving of being the Shiya heir. With all due respect, give up on such yourself.”

“...Eh.”

.... well, then. I might be mistaken, but I suspect Kaya-san might dislike me. Either that, or this is just the classic drama situation over claims of inheritance.

“Let’s just get going, Seiren-sama.”

“Oh, right.”

Pulled away by the sound of Minoa-san’s voice, who easily saw I was

offended, I kept going. Only then, did I reply to Kaya-san.

“I know.”

Really, being the daughter of a ryōshu and even being the atotori, which all suddenly came up yesterday. I did not have any such ambitious thinking. ... I just didn't have a choice. In such, I did also feel sorry for Saryuu.

Father's side of the third floor, it appeared to account for more than half of the total space. It covered most of the space above Saryuu's side of the second floor, and even extended into most of the area over the ritual chamber. As the head of the household, it made sense to be so big. The area above Saryuu's side didn't extend out as far as the area above my room, and as such, extra space was gained by making use of the space over the ritual chamber, at least such was what I learned from Minoa-san. Whatever works for the space needed for work. But it seemed like a big mistake, wasting so much materials.

“Oh, Seiren. It's nice that you came up to see me.”

“Father!”

“Hello, mi'lord.”

In an area between the two main rooms of the third floor, above the ritual chamber, was a sort of common room. Father was there leisurely drinking sayu, who then noticed me through the gap of the opened door and called out. Minoa-san was startled, not expecting him to be there. It was an adorable reaction.

“I’m sorry. I had asked for a tour of the castle so that I could look around. Mother invited me to her room, and we had tea, and I was told that I was to go next to father’s room.”

Since it was my own foolishness that lead to this situation, I explained everything properly. The slight smile of father almost gave voice, telling me that he already knew, what I honestly wished. My feelings, I wonder how well he knew them.

“I see then... So do you want to see my personal space?”

“Would that be alright?”

“Come on. Leaving my daughter seeming so troubled, what kind of father would that make me?”

It was the same as mother, who had said that earlier. Father then gave me a wry smile, which reminded me a lot of the Director’s smile.

I was then invited into father’s room, which had an ultra corporate style to it, for a change. It was sort of an amusing comparison. Specifically, it felt like the sort of room you would expect of a company president or executive, it was a very intimidating room. Considering his job as a lord, father suited such I thought. There was a private room in the back, which didn’t look that big. At least, it didn’t seem so. Still, being like a business area, it was so cool. The pillars of the room looked to be made of some dark wood. The walls were similar but thinner, it was such beautiful wood. The carpet wasn’t patterned with any flowers like my room, instead it was checkered between brown and cream. Without even a chandelier, it was strictly wall lamps that sustained the light of this room. There was a large window with a thin soft curtain. Probably used

during the night, the thicker curtains that were currently pulled back on both sides had a color and pattern similar to the carpet. As for the other furniture, it was all a simple masculine dark brown. But still, being so rich, it wasn't stuff you would see in a simple hardware store, closer to something found at a professional furniture store. The most expensive thing in this castle was the furniture, especially the ones in this room. What caught my eye the most, was one of the bookshelves that rested against one of the walls. Having a door made of glass, an arrangement of books set with a hard quality binding hidden within. Each book was just under a quarter the size of a piece of construction paper, but were lined up without much for quantity. I also think I saw a map.

“Wow, this looks to be filling up.”

“I have a little talent with Poetry and Literature, and sometimes find time to write it down.”

Father gave a quick sigh, but I found this very interesting. I thought of such occasional work with books, even if not as a complete hobby. Such might involve the lord of the family going out to see distant relatives... though, it would then probably be on much the same level as drinking stories over some sake while watching baseball. Really, it sounded wonderful. But considering things, the books were probably well preserved, but would be hard to amass. No wonder there is so much open space. While considering such, father gave me a “You can have one if you want to read it.” Woah, I could borrow a book from the bookshelf?

“Saryuu isn't nearly as interested in reading as Seiren. Rather than listening to a lecture, he seems to prefer running around outside.”

“That would be normal for a guy his age.”

With such an answer, Minoa-san tilted her head in curiosity.... maybe someday, I should find the opportunity to discuss properly my past life as a guy with my maids. It might otherwise cause trouble in the future. Saryuu was just a boy, at 14 he was four years younger than me. I knew fully well that a boy his age stuck studying at home, he wouldn't be happy unless he had a compelling love for it. No, but I still properly studied at school.

Looking at it, there was another issue I found lined up in the bookshelf. These characters written along the thick spines of the books, I couldn't understand them at all. Truthfully, this would be a problem, my own personal failure.

"Another thing, I can't actually read this."

"You can't read?"

"They aren't familiar worlds, they aren't the same as the words I got used to in my 18 years while at the other world. At least, I can't read the characters on this book cover."

I replied in honesty. However, I immediately felt I would like to learn how to read such. I had characters written on my clothes as a baby, which should have been the same as the characters on this book. Because the name Seiren was attached to my clothes, I was brought up as such for 18 years. Possibly, there just wasn't that much difference in respect to the characters for the name Seiren, between each world. Still, it would be really useful to learn to read in this world, I thought. For some reason though spoken words weren't any different, which was strange to consider. At least that means there was no issues with talking.

“I see. Hmm... wouldn't that would be inconvenient?”

After hearing my explanation, father put his hand on his chin. He nodded an “alright then”, after thinking a little.

“Simple, we just need to try and have you learn from Kuon. In the meanwhile, she can also teach you about etiquette.”

“Kuon?”

“She is Saryuu's personal teacher. Kasai Kuon.”

“Oh, the personal teacher. Minoa-san was talking about her earlier.”

“It's good that you know about her so soon.”

Having heard that I was already familiar with the kateikyōshi, father laughed in relief. No, I only heard a little bit about her. And in the first place, the sensei was asked to come here just to teach stuff to Saryuu. She wouldn't also have time for me?!

“But, I wouldn't want to get in the way of Saryuu's studies. Even if I'm the heir.”

“Because Kuon is home all day, it wouldn't be a problem to split you two between morning and afternoon. She would likely enjoy a break from Saryuu's mischievousness, you will spare her in that regards.”

Mwhahaha. Not exactly a joyous laugh, father. ... Brother-in-law, what do you do, during your studies. It's easy to understand that he would find being pressured into study boring, and would not want to sit still. I was also a lot like that at his age. In my case, it was a lot of wasted effort thanks to the Director.

"Saryuu is like that, it's in his nature to enjoy simply running around outside, as I said earlier. But, if he learns that his sister will be there to watch him, Saryuu will be focused at his desk. So, it will be much better this way."

Watching father's expression while explaining such, Saryuu would definitely hate studying. He would probably more prefer to wave around a sword, or such stuff. Something like that, probably. For me however, it would be important that I somehow learned more. I did not know how to even read in this world, and I would only have a harder time later if I didn't learn properly.

Also, I should consider other people's reluctance in me, such as Kaya-san's hostilities towards me, and even Saryuu's apparent hatred for me. In order to deal with these kind of things, I'm certain knowledge will be necessary. In order to do my best to make sure everything works out with Saryuu as well, I would need to amass a hoard of knowledge for myself.

"I understand. I want a chance to study. Thank you, father."

"Okay, then. Leave it to me."

My father was strangely cheerful, as he struck his chest. ... I wondered a little at how lucky I was to have such parents, to be their daughter. The director, even he never treated me this well. I wondered subconsciously, might I even just be a bit too spoiled here, possibly.

Chapter 13: Good Grief, Reality Problems

For lunch, the entire family ate in the dining hall again, including Saryuu. Saryuu, I was supposed to inspire this guy's change of heart, but was there anyway I could think of something? Consomme soup with a generous amount of vegetables, with a line up of freshly baked bread covered under a slab of ham and a side of egg salad. Dessert included some sort of dark purple strawberry-like fruit. Even in this world, it was also spring, so the fruits would be in season. I was surprised by the color, but still enjoyed it because of how deliciously sweet yet sour it was. Mother arrived with Kaya-san, who did glance my way briefly before leaving the dining hall. She didn't have to worry, I didn't have any particular intent on snitching on her to mother.

"Kaya's job can be very difficult, she is a very reliable maid. Still, she can be a little hard-headed at times."

Oh, also mother's perspective of Kaya-san. With a calm portion of sympathy, I worried about what sort of work from mother was so notably difficult. Even so, regardless.. I honestly had no intent on getting in Saryuu's way. I wasn't that type of person, even though she didn't seem to believe me when I said such.

After lunch was finished, Minoa-san was replaced by Alica-san, who came over to pick me up and return me to my room. It seems it was important to have someone guide me for now, possibly so that I did not get lost. On the way, I noticed that Alica-san had a box of shortbread in her hands. Nice, she brought me more.

"Is everything alright, Seiren-sama?"

“Hmm?”

Suddenly being asked such, I paused instead of sitting on the sofa. Well, what happened earlier wasn't something I would want to talk about. Alica-san wasn't there to see it anyway. However, it wasn't the only thing to talk about.

“... So Alica-san, how was your work today?”

“Oh, yes. I was busy washing the clothes that you had when you first returned here. They should be finished after dinner.”

“Oh, you were washing that for me? Thank you so much.”

It was very surprising. Those clothes, I was shocked because I had suspected they were just thrown away. They were now much too large for me to wear, let alone being designed for a guy. But even so, to have it washed for me..

“Sorry. I worry about how well I had washed it, since I was not very familiar with the fabric.”

“Oh, it's okay if they shrunk a little because I did so myself already. Really, thank you.”

With something like a kagaku-seni, it would only be expected. The details of the material should be written on the tag, however Alica-san probably couldn't read the characters that came from the other world.

My high school uniform. In the future, I probably will never have an

opportunity to ever wear it again. The only evidence “Shikino Siren” ever existed, I wanted to be able to cherish it. When I get it back, I will have to make sure to have it securely placed deep in my closet.

“Well, it seems this was a pleasant distraction from what happened earlier.”

While being given a chance to daydreaming happily, Alica-san suddenly returned to the original story. The situation with Kaya, which was a rather sensitive story. It was something very difficult to discuss.

“Oh, about that. Alica-san, you know Kaya... Mother’s personal maid.”

“Ah yes, we are well acquainted. Minoa and Oriza as well, since Kaya was our senior maid when we got this job. What about her?”

“So she has a lot of experience as a maid. Then, mother depends on her greatly.”

So then, she was very well established as a maid. Being such an important maid to the wife of the family’s lord, it spoke highly of her merit and ability in its own way. So she wasn’t just a little experienced, she had quite a lot of experience. Compared to the rest of the staff, she would have a lot of influence.

“Well, it’s a difficult thing to talk about... A while ago, she told me that Saryuu would make a much better heir than me. I... did only just return not that long ago.”

“Oh. That would be due to Kaya-san being so close to Saryuu-sama as he grew up.”

“I guess...”

So... maybe this was then just a family dispute? No, it was not yet something out of control. Alica-san gave a comforting nod, Kaya-san has simply been left to care for Saryuu at home for so long and so has thus started to support him, it made sense. The sudden return of their true daughter, it has simply made Kaya-san nervous. I'm certain, after supporting such a favorite child, it would simply be inevitable to be suspicious of their sudden rival. I recall such occurring too, back in grade school. When a student who was favored by a teacher got a high mark, cheating was suspected. I disliked this sort of troubling perspective. Having such strong support from all of the teachers and other staff, it was simply hard work that lead to good results. However, there was a lot of fuss over this at the principal's office. The next year, the same teacher was suddenly transferred to another school. That teacher, I wonder how he was doing now. Hopefully after the student continued to do well in school, the teacher was allowed to return. He was a really good teacher after all. Everyone in the class got along well with him, with no other troubles.

...Saryuu too, he seems a lot like that guy. He came from the place of his birth to this home, and worked hard expecting to become a heir. Being still 14 years old, I would have expected he would have been more focused on going out to play or being interested in a girl, instead.

“I really don't know him very well, having only met him this morning. Still, I think Saryuu would make a much better heir for the family. Saryuu himself seems to agree, as well.”

I quietly utter such words, admitting to my thoughts. However, Alica-san gave a tight crisp facial expression that gazed straight at me.

“Seiren-sama as you should know, the Shiya Family is a ryōshu of this region. That means the entitlement of being heir is based entirely on bloodline status.”

“About such, chihō ryōshu. Wouldn't it still be bad to have a heir that wasn't fit for the role?”

“Although not very deeply, your family does have some royal blood. While you might be a several dozen in line from it, this does even give you a right to the throne itself.”

“... Oh..”

Well then. Like it or not, I'm stuck with this sort of family issue. After all, this is a world of kings and nobles and such, I knew that there was no way I could somehow escape that. However, due to all the various marriages of state within this kingdom, I had somehow ended up with blood from the royal family and ties to the throne, which felt almost like a fairy tale. Considering what I've learned so far, it was like a kingdom from the 800s. Being so far from the throne, it couldn't realistically be worth worrying about. Being several dozen away in line for the throne, it wouldn't realistically happen in my lifetime.

“Well, that would require a large portion of the main royal family to be wiped out, it's not very realistic.”

“Of course, however, your entitlement for being our heir stems from being this close to the bloodline of the royal family.”

“..... I guess.”

“Conversely, the Duchess welcomed your brother-in-law from a further distant family of your bloodline, of a different household.”

“Oh, So then... regarding such, being welcomed from such a distant family, Kaya-san would have to consider that too.”

There was another thing, marriage. That would also be a problem. Jeez. Even the recently mentioned part about having this degree of blood of the royal family, it could very possibly raise some troublesome political issues I had not considered before. In circumstances such as this, arranged marriages would be commonplace.

“... ah, this royal lineage stuff, mendokusai.”

“I’m sorry for having burdened you with such thoughts.”

Alica-san took a moment after hearing my complaints, and embraced me in a warm hug. I was worried for a moment, such a close expression of emotional comfort. Actually, no, it doesn’t matter because we are both women. I had forgotten that, for a moment. Considering my entire future, this marriage issue could be an even bigger problem. Such as, maybe Kaya-san was planning to have Saryuu inherit the right to become heir, by finding a way to arrange my marriage somewhere far away. I wasn’t exactly opposed to Saryuu becoming heir, in all due respect, but marriage... to a guy... uh, umm...

“An arranged marriage, how likely is that going to be imposed on me?”

“Arranged for Seiren-sama? I don’t know of any plans at present, but it might happen in the future. Seiren-sama is the eldest daughter of the Shiya Family, so

she will need to be found a suitable marriage opportunity.”

“... oh, really?”

Alica-san answered with an admirable smile, though I was only capable of nodding at her in defeat.

Then, I suddenly considered.. This heir problem, wouldn't this possibly have been a lot easier to deal with if I had returned here as a guy? Maybe not, considering the age period, an eldest biological son and adopted second son, it would have probably turned out the same way. However, I was completely certain that the glare I got from Kaya-san was strictly because I was also a woman. Well, in this case it is a woman that is up against the trained son-in-law, there is no changing that. After considering everything for a while, I think I would rather it not happen, Saryuu being heir of the family.

Still, it might be best to learn what Saryuu thinks of all of this before working further.

“Oh, Seiren-sama. I have some more of that shortbread from earlier, would you like to have some?”

“It's okay. I just had plenty of shortbread this morning, don't worry about it.”

“Alright then.”

Though it had no actual relevance, Alica-san bringing out the box of shortbread gave me some relief somehow, though I wasn't sure why.

Chapter 14: Next Step, Exploring Outside ①

Anyway, after getting to relax a bit after lunch, it will finally be time for my outdoor tour. Alica-san handed me a “please use this, as it is proper etiquette for this time of day” with a cute parasol, which she had brought along. Pure white fluttering in the wind, with a long sturdy wooden handle. It was visibly fancy, and probably came from mother’s collection.

“When I mentioned to the duchess that Seiren-sama wanted to check out the garden, I was told to make sure you had that one. It was picked for being large yet simple.”

“I’m to have what? Oh, this, so mother picked it for me?”

“Oh, yes, that is correct.”

“... I see. Okay, can you please thank her for me later?”

Mother, simply gave me this. Along with the outfit and hair barrette, I’ve been given a lot of different things from mother and father. Speaking of such, another thing mother did for me, she had woven the contents of the talisman bag onto a portion of the ribbon for my dress, so for the first time that ring was finally seeing light. Of course, I would have to take very good care of it.

“Do you like it?”

“Yup.”

“I’m glad.”

Alica-san and I laughed happily, as I was startled for a moment, forgetting what she was meaning.

As we headed towards the entrance hall, we found Yuzuruha-san there. He looked towards me, and then gave a quick bow.

“I’ve heard you’ve had a desire to get to see the yard outside of the castle, Seiren-sama.”

“Yes. I have only been inside the castle so far since arriving yesterday. I want to also have a chance to see outside.”

After explaining why I wanted to see outside, Yuzuruha-san’s “Please, have a nice trip” saw me off. Still, with a suddenly tense expression, he also spoke further with a whisper before I could pass him.

“While I have complete faith in Alica, please take care as to not go too far from the castle. While we do not want you to feel trapped in a cage, we do have an obligation to look after you.”

“I will be careful. I will try to make sure that I would not stray far from Alica-san.”

“By all means, please do so.”

Hmm, even being the Duke's daughter, the regulations regarding leaving home were still quite strict. I wondered, maybe this was mostly due to my disappearance 18 years ago. Still, Saryuu was the one who made this trip for morning lessons, and soon I will be doing so for my own in the afternoon as well.

Still, I should be careful. When I show up in front of her, mother gives me a hug without any hesitation. Whenever I have something to ask, father will be happy to reply. Those two, I truly would not wish to cause them any further grief.

Yuzuruha-san held opened the main entrance door, motioning for me to continue outside. This would be the first time since coming here, that I would get to be outside. Still, there was just one more thing to consider.

".... my first time past the first door, and even this space just outside seems so vast.."

This was the front porch? Standing outside the front door, everything look so enormous. It felt like an exceptionally extravagant hotel. A number of stairs formed a staircase on top of the ground, cut from exceptionally long cobblestones. Looking back at the design of the entrance from the other side of the door, a short distance from doorway, another medium sized door had lined the entrance. Considering the design of the entrance hall, which I had looked at earlier this morning, I suspected that other door was a staff entrance for direct access to their own rooms. Meanwhile, the main door extended from the porch to the roof. Looking up from below, I could see more whitish arabesques draping the walls. The atmosphere was nice without being too notably darkened.

"There is a Horse-drawn carriage available, sheltered nearby so that it does

not become wet from rain or snow.”

Since Yuzuruha-san was busy with work and had already gone back into the castle, Alica-san went over the details of this expanse. A horse-drawn carriage. This world really did lack mechanical development, but at least there was some form of basic transportation. although the horses here, might not be like the horses I’m familiar with either.

“While it is not a problem for this season, the ground here is especially slippery in the winter, it will be especially slippery on the cobblestone. With such, please be careful.”

“Snow, that won’t be for a while.”

“That is true. It is possible to get heavy enough snowfalls to be covered ankle deep.”

Such a snowfall. The cobblestone, carved with such a beautiful stripped pattern, most likely would be quite slippery indeed. Considering snow, I recalled from the past, the snowman I made that was built from the snow in the orphanage garden. I had used some empty cans that were left lying around to make a face. I recalled, I even made sure the cans were properly discarded later. Once winter pilled in enough, it might be fun to have a snowball fight.... actually no. I get the feeling that such would not be allowed. After all, everyone is cautious about my safety simply because I’ve stepped outside.... but I hope that by winter, they will have calmed down a bit. Well, for now I should just enjoy myself, with winter quite far away.

At this, I looked onward at the path extending beyond the stairs at the bottom of the porch. The path was a cleanly-set stone pavement, with another

dirt path lined beside it. On both sides of the path were rows of some sort of tree, which had already grown thick shallow green leaves. The rows of planted trees outside looked like a garden itself. Because of being spring, they were lined with a variety of different flowers. I wonder if those were placed there intentionally. The path continued beyond this gardened decoration, towards the main gate a little farther away. The gate itself looked like a fence of iron, set between the two gateposts on both sides, looking a little wider than the main gate from my school. It was also slightly taller than most people, with another smaller entrance a short distance away, like some kind of service entrance. The iron fence-line extended around the castle farther than I could see. Most likely, it completely surrounded the castle.

“Alica-san, the gate over there, is that the inner main gate?”

“Yes, there is a gatekeeper standing watch there.”

A gatekeeper. Really, does my home need to be so strictly watched?

“Standing watch?”

“Exactly, because opening and closing the main gate will need a person present. Especially, in the event that a horse-drawn carriage has arrived, because they couldn’t then manage a gate that large by themselves.”

“Ah, what about over there? The smaller entrance over there, is that also for people?”

“Yes. That would be the private entrance, which can be used when not travelling very far away.”

I had not considered this. Yes, of course then, that could make such a large gate difficult. Because a world like this would not have anything to automatically operate it, someone would have to open it by hand. Having someone stationed for such... it made sense. Also, because it could be so hard to open such a door constantly, there was the other smaller entrance. Well, it seems I still had a lot to learn.

“I see, it seems helpful having someone watch the gate.”

As I am impressed, Alica-san continues to chat. In the meanwhile, the servant staff of maids and men restlessly rushed past. Most likely still so busy, due to lunch recently ending.

“I don’t know for certain, but a while ago there was a thief that frequently came to take from the food being grown here at the castle. That particular year, we had a very poor harvest as you might have guessed.”

“... oh..”

Hey, wait. In other words, there is a harvest field. Not just a flower garden, but an entire agricultural farmland field. Well, maybe that’s why Yuzuruha-san is always away from the castle so often. Just how much area does this castle cover, ittai. ... actually, I shouldn’t consider such stuff that is only making my head hurt.

“If you can’t eat, you can’t survive. So then, how did everyone endure?”

“It was alright to an extend due to foods already preserved in storage. When

a famine occurs or similar shortages in our dominion, we would often simply turn to trade with other lands. This also is true in the reverse situation.”

“So just help each other when needed. That makes sense.”

This was comforting to know. Well yeah, without resorting to trading for food with nearby regions, a lot of people could have died in starvation. Once such occurs, everything in the territory goes out of control. Calmly considering such, Alica-san turned to me once more.

“So, would you like to keep going, Seiren-sama?”

“I would. Alica-san, please lead the way.”

“Certainly. Do not forget to make use of your parasol. As well be careful, please watch your footing.”

“I will.”

Yes, at least the parasol opened normally. Not truly my style of parasol, but it was good regardless. With such, I made my way down the stairs. At least it wasn't raining, trying not to slip was difficult as is.

Chapter 15: Next Step, Exploring Outside ②

As was the plan discussed with Yuzuruha-san, I decided to take the time to circle around the entire area of the castle. Regarding the fields discussed earlier, I wasn't certain if that was something I could simply cover on foot. Having moved on from the entrance porch, I noticed another servant walk out from another entrance close to the area under my room. This morning, this was the place I saw Saryuu doing his sword practice. A little ways away from the castle was a flower bed, the bricks surrounding the little pink and yellow pansy-like flowers blooming. People coming to the castle from outside will find themselves surrounded by countless flowers, as if to warmly welcome them.

"This flower, it's so pretty."

Saying such words unexpectedly, Alica-san responded instantly. Checking what I was looking at, she gave a "Oh" at my giggling.

"If you like them so much, I could have some brought to your room later."

"Could we? Oh, but it would be much better to keep it in a pot than in a vase."

"Yes, of course. I will make sure the pot is delivered to your room later."

Oh, that was awesome. Alica-san, it seems she always knows the right thing to say. I didn't really like cut flowers, potted plants were much better. My biggest concern, unless the flower is growing and blossoming in a pot, it won't exactly live very long.

We continued around the corner. Reaching the end of the flower bed, I saw tall shrubbery going from the fence up to around two to three meters from the castle. It was quite magnificent to look at, from both the path and from the window, though I had not looked that closely from the window as I was distracted by Saryuu. The stone-paved path ended here, the way further being filled only by rough pebbles.

“Oh, the path ends here. What is further ahead?”

“Further in the back is our food storage, which is where we store food that has been brought here.”

“Oh, so it’s for the staff.”

That would be that. Certainly being located near the kitchen in that location of the back, it would make sense to have a food storage in that area. It wouldn’t do to have the chef need to walk very far when carrying such foods.I wonder if there is things such as freezers, or even refrigerators. Well, one could always hope, but it isn’t very likely.

“All this food carried over the paved stone, I wonder if it was transported with a cart or something..”

“That would happen whenever we would be purchasing them in bulk. However, usually the amount is much less and they are just carried in by hand.”

“That sounds tiring.”

I imagined one of the maids, walking around carrying vegetables in her hands. Ah, yeah.. a long time ago, I remember going out shopping for food with the Director. When you add the Director's staff, we all surely ate a greedy amount. It was quite a lot to carry back to the orphanage, only made harder with the lack of proper eco-bags, instead we had plenty of cheap plastic bags. Director, I still had fun those days. Well, here they probably didn't even use plastic bags, instead maybe they just used paper bags to carry their apples, or otherwise carried them without a bag. So very tiring.

Otherwise, in the area within the fence, next to the castle, there was a place where the stones had been treated roughly. This was probably where Alica-san and I saw Saryuu this morning, around this place. Looking at the wall of the first floor of the castle, were small windows concealing what was inside using white curtains.

"Saryuu was practicing with his sword around here, wasn't he?"

"That's correct. Though I don't understand why he does so here, on your side of the castle."

I nodded my agreement, while Alica-san massaged her neck inquisitively. The area in front of Saryuu's room, it would be on the other side of the entrance, I wasn't certain why he didn't just practice there either.

"The area under Saryuu's room, what was it used for?"

"Ah yes, that was the area for the male servant staff, including the part Yuzuruha-san uses as his own private room, I hear."

For all the male staff. The second floor just above it belonged to Saryuu, and on the third floor was the same for father. That side as a whole, that side was entirely designed for the men. This other side of course, it was for the women.

“So the area here before us is where Alica-san sleeps, as well?”

“Oh, no. My room is not one of the ones down here, mine is one of the rooms in the attic.”

“Attic?”

... so there is also a floor on the attic, with even more rooms. However, I will not be able to get a tour of that area, because I was not allowed into such staff areas. But I wonder, how would they reach the attic, maybe from the third floor?

“When we were looking around the third floor earlier, I didn’t see any stairs going up further.”

“Behind the castle, there is another staircase dedicated for the staff. I take it frequently, as it also gives easy access to all of our work rooms.”

“I see, so you’re just using another passageway.”

“It can be a confusing maze at times. However, since nothing is really sealed, this makes it much easier if we were faced with a thief or such.”

“... ah. It sounds complicated, to me at least.”

Really, being so rich there was always the risk of thieves. This would just be inspiring for thieves, after all. At the same time, it means only the staff will get to see such stairs. A secret passage designed only for the maids.... giving them easy access suddenly all over the castle. It almost seemed unfair. Still, it was commonplace in this castle. Wait a moment, about what she said earlier, it was sounding like she was a ninja slinking around the shadows of secret hallways.

Looking further upwards, I could see the windows of the second and third floor. The third floor, that would be the window for mother's room, and the second floor window below it would be for mine. The first floor, so only a few of the maids stayed behind those windows. Speaking of such, that would mean Alica-san and Minoa-san would have had other work, before coming to care for my room. It was something else to consider.

"Alica-san and the other two maids, have you three been working here very long?"

"Yes. Before you came I was usually assigned to help with the preparation and cleaning for meals in either the kitchen or the dining hall."

"And so then, you've had your room for a while."

"Whenever we got sick, it was always helpful to have a place to rest. However we do spend a lot of time working late hours behind curtains until it is time to sleep, very often we never get to go outside."

I understood. Kaya-san was assigned as mother's personal maid, and in just the same way, Alica-san-tachi were assigned to me. So then, there were quite a number of unseen people looking after things here. Still, it wasn't yet clear why

Saryuu picked here to swing around his sword.

“That might actually make sense.”

“Seiren-sama?”

“Saryuu and his practicing here, I think it was because he didn’t want to be seen by someone. Most likely by Yuzuruha-san, probably, who would have complained that he wasn’t being diligent in his studies.”

As father had said earlier, Saryuu would much rather play outside than study. Considering his burden of people expecting him to be a good heir, he was just too embarrassed to been seen doing such by those who scrutinized him with such expectations. He would need to diligently study for such, because it would be hard to properly be heir of the family if he otherwise wasn’t knowledgeable enough. I mean, neglecting such could lead to a lot of problems for the family.... historical dramas like this, I’ve read so much about.

“Until yesterday, I wasn’t even here. Being here, he wouldn’t have been seen much at all. Here, behind the large trees in front of the entrance, with my room vacant until yesterday, it would have been the perfect location for him.”

“That is true. Seiran-sama’s room’s furniture and such was only obtained a little while ago, it was indeed an empty room until then.”

So it really made sense, Saryuu would have been here hiding while shaking a sword, instead of doing the studying that would have otherwise been expected of him. He chose the right time and location when he wouldn’t be easily seen, until I arrived. Indeed, I mean his sister only just came back yesterday, he

wouldn't have ever noticed that he was under my window. After all, this just made sense for a boy his age. I would know because I've been through similar myself.

"I did a lot of knitting when I was a young teen. I wanted to look strong, so hid such embarrassment so that no one saw it."

Also, there is just the concern about being bullied due to being seen doing such stuff. I really did have to worry about most the same stuff as Saryuu is now. Except of course, I certainly didn't have any interest in waving around swords. The director did task me with building more of my physical prowess, but, that was mostly because I would never hit anyone and always got bullied.

"You did such a thing?"

"I still remember. I would just never speak of such, trying hard to escape discovery."

"Certainly... you simply weren't properly understood. Were you just simply shy?"

I was not aware of it until then, but it was something else to consider. For me... my first moments as a woman, it was very embarrassing. So suddenly, my life as a guy was gone. Alica-san's reply left me wondering if I might be a bit mistaken suddenly, that maybe there was something I still didn't understand about how Saryuu felt. So then, this was something I might need to consider further.

"Saryuu-sama... he should not have done such a thing."

“Still, next time it might be best to pretend that I saw nothing.”

“Alright, just do be careful.”

Considering carefully what to do with him together, both of us couldn't help but laugh suddenly. I wasn't certain if Saryuu would return again tomorrow, but I wanted to encourage him. At the very least, I wasn't about to tell anyone else about it.

At that, I turned back to Alica-san. During breakfast, Saryuu also had a maid with him. It might be someone else next time, another maid attending to him.

“By the way, the maid with him. His maid is probably also aware of his routine morning exercises.”

His maid is probably familiar with his morning schedule, from what I could determine. Alica-san replied, holding a neutral expression.

“I had thought you were already aware. It seems Seiren-sama might not have noticed, the servant staff with Saryuu was a man.”

“What, they were?”

“Yes.”

Wow, I didn't notice at all. Saryuu has a male maid with him. Alica-san knew he was a guy. What kind of ninja was this maid?

Chapter 16: Next Step, Exploring Outside ③

Still following the castle, we continued around towards the back. We arrived at the alcove diagonally behind the dining room, where we saw more maids working really hard. There was also a guy working here, probably as a dishwasher. I saw him carrying what looked like a kitchen knife, which seemed rather sharp. Carrying it carefully, he headed towards the kitchen. Well, he was probably taking it to the Chef.... being rich, my home certainly had a lot going on.

I checked such with Alica-san, whose “Correct” nodded in confirmation.

“All of the meals are cooked here, even the ones for staff, so it gets very busy here. We all have to help out each other.”

“There are so many people here. We finished lunch a while ago.”

“There is also tonight’s dinner to consider, which they will be working on at this point as well.”

Oh, well yeah. Still, this method seemed so time consuming. It would be much more efficient if things were prepared in advance. Washing the vegetables, removing the head, bones, and scales from a fish. Buying meat pre-portioned to some extent as well, I guess, instead of eating the whole thing at one time. Speaking of such, I think I would like to see if there is a ranch here, to look at the animals. Actually, I would also like to have a chance to talk with the chef, it’s just impossible at meal time.

“We should make sure to not interrupt their work here.”

“True, I see what you mean.”

“Alright, then let’s quietly be off.”

“Okay.”

Quietly setting her index finger to her lips, Alica-san gestured for silence. Keeping along side Alica-san, I hurried after her so that we weren’t noticed.

We hid behind a small brick building, to keep away from the kitchen. Close beside it, acting as its neighbor, was another slightly smaller building with a chimney. Because the trees growing here were a distance away, they didn’t get in the way of the chimney, and there was another path leading up to its entrance, instead of simply grass. It was as if someone lived here.

“Alica-san, what is this?”

“This would be the Chimney Smokehouse. It is a warehouse for us to stash smoked foods, to help preserve foods such as dried or salted meat, teas, and spices.”

Ah, so then it was detached from the regular food pantry. Looking it over, the smokehouse appeared impressively big to me. Looking like it could feed a hundred people easily, the smokehouse felt like something you would see in a television commercial, that you know you couldn’t afford.

“So this preserves dried meat. What sort of spices is it for, like pepper?”

“Correct. In the old days such spices were just kept in a secure sealed storage, but nowadays it’s just easier to use such a warehouse instead.”

Storing spices in a secured storage, that seemed a bit excessive. No, actually I had memories of this from history classes. I learned at school that at one point, spices were so expensive because they were difficult to import. I wonder if that is true here.

“Just wondering, was spices always so treasured because they had to be imported from elsewhere?”

“That’s correct. Because of all the excessive costs of transportation they required.”

So it was true. Then the costs went down, because spices became easier to properly transport.

“If you’ve been getting them cheaply now, are they now being made nearby?”

“Yes. We have a variety of farms in the area that cultivate spices. In Shiya’s domain, there is a lot of spice production.”

“I see. It seems even the farmers are working hard here.”

If the spices are being produced so close, certainly it becomes cheaper to purchase. I think the farmers would work hard to also tend to other crops, since

its always good to sell stocks in variety. Considering storage, beside the regular warehouse, this smokehouse.. I still had a few questions about that.

“So, how does the smokehouse work?”

“Smoke is produced in the middle area. The Duke can use the smoke of alcohols to produce smoked bacon or smoked cheeses.”

“Oh..”

Smoked foods... I remember trying to smoke some foods with the director, we enclosed it in a small shelter made from cardboard boxes. To think that they would have something so grand as smoked bacon and such made here.. both smoked bacon and cheese in fact. I’ve never actually had sake before, I wasn’t sure what I would think of the taste.

“I’ve never had sake before, is there any chance I might be able to try a bit?”

“You would want a sample? Yeah, I think it would be alright. Saryuu-sama himself is quite fond of the cheese after a long day of studying. I’ll try asking later.”

“Yes, please ask for me.”

Yatta! It probably has been smoking in sake for a while, so I should eat it carefully. It might be a simple pleasure eating such poor smelling foods, but until around this time yesterday, that’s how my life was, poor. Having suddenly became so rich, it’s not something that I could adjust to this quickly.

Suddenly, Alica-san gave a quick clap of insight.

“Oh right, Seiren-sama. In the back here, there is a well that pumps the water for work. Do you want to have a look?”

“A well? Oh, I want to see!”

A well, huh? I haven't actually ever seen a classic well before myself. It was just too much of a bother to rely on before. Heading back around to behind the other food warehouse as I was asked, we found a rounded stone-enclosed well that only went up to my knees, the lid closed. Trying to forget horror movies that this reminded me of, calming myself with thoughts that such wasn't real. There was a pump attached with the lid, looking similar to the one I saw before in the bath. I'm guessing this was so buckets and pails could be brought here, to then have water pumped into it. However, that sounded rather tiring.

“You said this water was for work, so I'm guessing it isn't drinking water.”

“There is a little private well further up the hill that provides drinking water. This water is only used for cleaning, such as water for laundry or the bathroom.”

“So there is another private well..”

Actually, that wasn't all that surprising. Drinking water in the country was harder to purify enough for use, unlike bath or toilet water. But, then again, how did they even manage to filter the water from either stone well at all?

“Is there a big difference in the water quality?”

“I’m not certain, but I believe that hill simply has less that could taint the water, being so high up.”

“Oh, that makes sense.”

This well was a lot closer to home, the drinking well was a little harder to access. Then again, this well would be used a lot more often because keeping everything clean took much more water. I did still want a closer look at the drinking well. Being farther up the hill, it would be a lot further into nature up there. I still wanted to see more things, even if it will be harder.

“Hmm?”

As a sudden scent drifted along the breeze, I was curious to discover more about it. The fragrance seemed to hint at some kind of flower, leaving me wondering, what kind was it? Checking for the source of the familiar scent, I found some tiny white flowers blooming. I wasn’t certain, but it was certainly possible, these flowers maybe were used in the toilet as an air freshener. ... though curiously, I couldn’t recall seeing these flowers hanging anywhere in the toilet. Alica-san kept quiet a distance as she called ahead to me.

“In that direction is the toilet waste. We set it up carefully so that the smell would be contained here.”

“Oh, so it would extend from just ahead, going further beyond here.”

Centering my sights with the flowers, I failed to quickly interpret what was

going on this way. The area beyond would be full of water, and was it then the kind of waters left down here to be disposed of? Eww.. I did not want to think of it further. ... ah, but this makes sense, the flowers were planted here to keep the strong smells at bay.

“These flowers, they have such a strong scent. Are they here to ward off odors?”

“Correct. They are very popular with farmers that have to work with composts, they work very well to deal with such foul storage cellars.”

“Ah....”

It seems my assumptions for what the flowers were for were correct. An outdoor air freshener for toilet waste, unbelievable. Yeah... It would be best to not think too much about it. Really, such things would also be normal in this world. Following Alica-san's instructions for moving around the waste site, she quickly explained one other interesting facts for me to learn from.

“See that...? Above the disposal hole is a fence cover, to stop stray animals from falling inside. Other than the fence cover, there is also a wooden barricade.”

“.... It's probably a very good decision to have it so carefully protected like that.”

“... Yes, I agree.”

The disposal hole, containing such waste product,... falling into it,... simply

would not be a good thing. Not at all.

Making our way completely around, we returned back to the castle from behind, near father's room this time. On this side, there was no sign of a pantry or such, instead was more cobblestone paths, along with a cottage further in the distance. The cottage, perhaps it was the home of the private teacher. We were intercepted as we approached it.

“Oh, if it isn't Seiren-sama.”

“Oh, the old hermit!”

There I found the one who had returned me to this world as a woman, mahōtsukai-no-jīsan.

Chapter 17: Covertly Assisted, Stealthily Studying

Oh, was I surprised. No way, I didn't think I would meet the old wizard in a place like this.

"Hopefully we continue to get some good weather. Seiren-sama, would you care to come with me for a walk for a while?"

"Oh, uh, sure."

The old man walked along side me, asking such with a pleasant "ehaha" laughter. Oh, well, going for a walk would be okay. Wait no, hold on. What is with this old man, why is he here? His outfit, it wasn't anything like what he wore last night.

"Jigen-sensei... what are you doing?"

As the door to the cottage opened, the person who came out through the newly opened door... that couldn't be Oriza-san, could it?

"Oriza-san?"

"Oh! It's Seiren-sama."

Pyon, she came popping out of the cottage without the usual maid outfit I've seen her in, but instead wearing a simple pink dress. It was exceptionally fluffy,

way more than my own outfit, with a knee-long skirt overlapping over layered white sheets of cloth. There was a cute ribbon artfully woven, set into the frilly folds at the neck of the dress. Mother must have picked this out according to her usual tastes, even if it fit Oriza-san surprisingly well... It still wasn't like me at all.

"I thought you had today off."

"I might not have any work to do for Seiren-sama today, but there is plenty of other things needed to be done as well."

"It is as she's claimed, and there is a lot for us to study as well. Since you are Shiya's only daughter, we have to learn a lot of different things to do our job."

Oriza-san smiled happily, as Alica-san told me such with a wry smile. Certainly considering it now, my maids would have a lot more that they need to do. On top of that, my being here gave them a lot more they needed to learn.

"Oh, so you three take turns studying during your breaks? Wow, that sounds harsh, I'm very sorry."

"Don't worry, everything is fine. We enjoy studying such kekkō things."

Oriza-san laughed openly, with the same personality I was familiar with from yesterday. Still, they were having fun learning such stuff? I would have to check this with Saryuu. What they were studying, that was still unclear to me.

"Oriza-san is studying? What exactly are you studying now?"

“Today, Jigen-sensei taught us to read and write spells.”

“Jigen?”

“Yes, that would be me.”

Interrupting Alica-san, who was about to reply, the old man explained instead by placing his hand on his chest. The old man then took a moment to step forwards, followed with a very deep bow.

“It is an honor that you’ve come to visit, Seiren-sama. My name is Kasai Jigen. I’m the Shiya Family’s exclusive wizard.”

“Exclusive?”

“When something comes up in your family that is magic in nature, I’m the one who is always responsible to take care of it. I’ll be looking over you in the same way from now on too.”

Wow.. My family, they have an exclusive wizard. So even this was normal here. Well, there was even the ritual chamber in the castle, so of course this was normal. Wait, Kasai?

“I see. As I recall Kasai was also the family name of Saryuu’s private teacher.”

“Oh, I see you’re already familiar with her. Kuon is my granddaughter.”

I listened very carefully, while being explained such details. The old man... Jigen-san laughed with a dusty old cough like he was caught in a dust cloud at a wholesale store, then slowly nodded with a soft smile.

“Despite any wisdom I might offer, Saryuu is studying in the diligent care of my granddaughter. Thanks to such, we were generously given such a place to live.”

“Yeah.. Jigen-sensei is very wise.”

“Yes. Sorcery is very hard to learn. Jigen-sensei is the greatest wizard for our lord.”

The two maids quickly drove back Jigen-san’s presented humbleness, with overflowing compliments. Well, it was still amazing to have such a great wizard exclusive to the family... he was so great that it was with his help, my parents could recover the daughter they lost 18 years ago. I had no doubt, this old man was capable of some amazing magic.

“Well, instead of standing out here talking, there should be tea inside. Kuon should be out still talking with the Duke, would you care to spend a moment talking to this old man?”

“Oh, alright.”

Well, wizardry aside, Jigen-san did leave a very good-natured feeling of a grandfather. The old man wanted to get to talk with me. I thought it would be fine, it would be a good opportunity to settle a few remaining questions.

“Hmm.. Seiren-sama certainly has many guides for her now, I hope you don’t mind adding another. The three of us can look after you properly now.”

“Oh, Minoa-san is here now too.”

Jigen-san, I want a chance to learn much more. Oriza-san got to hear his lessons too. It felt like this was a grand opportunity offered by destiny that I simply couldn’t let slip past, but with Minoa-san here now, I had to be cautious. Minoa-san might have been sent by an angry Yuzuruha-san because I’ve been missing for so long.

“Alica-san, could you bring word to the castle of what I’m doing?”

“Yes, I will pass on your message.”

After a time, Alica-san returned. With Minoa-san now joining us, we entered Jigen-san’s home. Minoa-san gave us snacks from the kitchen, since we’ve been missing for a while and haven’t eaten yet. Compared to the castle, the inside of the cottage was considerably more ordinary. Still, even though a wizard lived here, it felt closer to my father’s room, with a wall full of bound books of various origins among a sequence of equally various posters, all full of symbols I didn’t understand. Surprisingly enough, I even found what looked like the preserved skull of a frog. When given the opportunity, I sat down on a couch that encouragingly seemed a little old-fashioned, neat and clean, near the kitchen. Ah.. yes... living like this felt so much better to me. I sorta wish I was actually born more in a quaint place like this. But there was nothing I could do about it, I was born with this lineage. Still, the kitchen was completely unexpectedly familiar as if by magic, with what looked like a refrigerator set near other electrical kitchen appliances. Thanks to Oriza-san working diligently,

we quickly got to appreciate some tea. This tiny cottage was part of the Shiya Family property, so it would make sense that it would still have good furniture and tableware. Never the less, it brought be a brief moment of tranquility, resting here with a familiarly simple tea cup. Bringing out an notably similar simple small plate, Minoa-san quickly piled it full of cookies for us.

“There we go.”

“Thank you, Oriza-san! Please excuse my reach.”

“Go ahead. Seiren-sama certainly seemed thirsty. Oh, and I’ve left additional arrangements for Minoa and Alica in the kitchen.”

“Oh, thank you Oriza.”

“... sorry.”

The maids, they even drank tea separately. How sad... having to keep such a distance all the time. The two of them however reply with full appreciation. This just the way things are here, I’m not allowed to change anything.

“Alica-san and Minoa-san, please go enjoy your tea. I will remain here.”

“Okay.”

“Please excuse my rudeness.”

“I will be awaiting you in the kitchen.”

Well, after all, they are maids. The three of them each look back once more before turning to the kitchen. Jigen-san was sitting in a single seat couch, already sipping from his strange tea cup on his own awkwardly. Hmm, I wonder about his cup, was it homemade? For now, I had a sip from my own tea. Ah, it was delicious as usual. Taking just a single cookie, Jigen-san put down his own cup. He then looked me straight in the eyes, before slowly asking his question.

“... this world, have you grown a little accustomed to it yet? In your time today since yesterday.”

“It’s surprising what sort of manners are expected here, yet my maids and my parents are very supportive of me, one way or another. But this social status system... I’ve got to say, it has been very troubling.”

Speaking so gently, it was surprising to hear of his concerns suddenly like this. Are you also familiar with my circumstances, Jigen-san? Finding my real parents so suddenly, and how much of a struggle everything has been for me.

“Seiren-sama, please do not concern yourself over such. That is simply the way of things in this world.”

“Yes, I know.”

Minoa-san went over all of this already too... but at least Jigen-san knew that I came from a different world living with different values... sigh, all of this has me worn out.

“And your new body, how is that working out for you?”

“Well it has become harder to look down and see myself. It’s also a lot harder to put on my underwear.”

“I see. However, girls have a much more fragile physique, so please take good care of yourself.”

“I’ll be careful.”

... specifically female physique, huh? I would have to be cautious in any rate, I don’t have much of any experience at all being a woman yet. I was familiar with how to live as a guy, but I’ll be living from now on otherwise.

“Oh, this reminds me. Earlier Oriza-san said something about magic.”

“Yes, I’m well versed in the peculiar dialect needed to perform the art of sorcery. Studying this, it is possible to lift someone into the air, or summon small objects.”

“Wow.”

Ohh.. To think this magical world would be capable of such. This old man was truly an expert in this field of study, with an visible talent for magic.

“Oh, so Jigen-san could help me learn how to use this magic stuff myself?”

“So you want to walk down that path. I wonder if some of your motivation is in recognition of my finding out your whereabouts in the other world.”

“That’s correct. Is it very difficult to learn?”

“Well, it is a little difficult. It takes a considerably long time to learn, I’m sorry to tell you.”

“Couldn’t you teach me at least a bit? I really want to learn more about it.”

The old man was trying to turn me away, but I wasn’t worried about the hardship. I vanished to another world, my gender changing forcing me to live as another person, and I had to live like that for the 18 years of my life so far. The old man might be worried it takes too much time, but coming back from a world so vastly different, after going through this much, I wasn’t about to give up so easily. I might have started out as their daughter, but I had to get used to being a guy.

After taking a deep breath, I noticed my tea was gone. Minoa-san had been keeping watch and so was aware of such as well, she quickly flew across the room in a rush.

“I’m sorry, Seiren-sama. I noticed you were getting excited talking about sorcery just a moment ago.”

“It’s okay. I just got a bit absent-minded there for a moment.”

The tea here was indeed delicious, way more than my poor tongue was adjusted too. Most likely, I’ll need to get used to such luxury.

“After teaching Kuon-sensei, she’s managed to develop considerable mastery of magic, and we’ve found such knowledge to be of great convenience as well... Seiren-sama would also find such knowledge to be very convenient.”

Oriza-san’s face even visibly expressed her concerns in consideration to my feelings. She was standing up for me? All in under a day, my situation kept changing so dramatically.

“I’m sorry, thank you for bringing that to light.”

“Hmph. I’m not the one you should be saying that to. This is your job, after all!”

However, Oriza-san was visibly smiling radiantly, after earning such a victory, it was a different vicious side of her. Well no, she was still a beautiful girl. I was probably just still thinking things through like a guy.

In the meanwhile, Alica-san and Minoa-san also returned. Subtly, they both had a satisfied look on their faces. The tea, it really was delicious. Oh it was excellent, with such perfect taste.

“Thank you for the tea, it was delicious.”

“Yes indeed. It was so very delicious.”

“Ah, it was great. Done to perfection.”

In addition to Oriza-san who was already standing next to me, bringing all three maids back together again. Jigen-san looked over all the girls with a sharp eye. In that moment, everything became tense.

“Alica-dono, Minoa-dono, Oriza-dono.”

“Yes?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, wha? What is it?”

“Seiren-sama came here yesterday from quite a different place. From that place, she has ever since had to struggle to adjust to the uncertainties of a new body.”

Jigen-san explained such plainly, covering generic details of my circumstances thus far. Yeah well, I was living as a guy until yesterday. Suddenly ending up in a girl’s body like this, it was a very stressful experience. I mean, it was hard enough to learn I wasn’t even originally a guy... I wonder if I would have lived my life differently if I had known this in the other world.

“Considering this carefully, I’ve decided that Seiren-samatsuki-nō-san-pō shall henceforth be granted private lessons in the art of magic. Oriza-dono, I will be teaching you later today what you will need to know, in the off-chance that Seiren-sama needs immediate guidance in times when I’m not around.”

“Yes, I will do as you ask.”

Following Jigen-san's declaration, Oriza-san turned in silent inquiry with her colleagues, as if they had already talked about this previously. For some reason, I also turned to look. Of course, this was a condition I would be glad to accept. Alica-san and Minoa-san held a neutral expression of thought for a time, then eventually simply nodded. At this, both of them turned to Jigen-san and bowed.

"I understand. Such will be as you request."

"Thank you for your leadership and support."

The two of them seemed to fully accept this decision. For them, there wasn't to be any changes, they were to simply look over to me as usual.

"I will be sure to be careful. Alica-san, Minoa-san, Oriza-san, take care."

As such, I presented my honest request with diligence. All at the exact same time, "Of course" was spoken resolutely by all three maids, to my great relief. However myself, this will be yet another big change.

"I hope you'll excuse my selfish request."

"Everything will be fine. We've each been assigned to the personal care of Seiren-sama of the Shiya Family, so all of us therefore understand our collective role to do such."

This was still troubling for me, though even Jigen-san seemed to understand. Along with being a wizard, he seems to have quite a few years of wisdom to go

with it.

“Seiren-sama, after this, be certain to study hard. Ganbattekudasaimaseyo.”

“I will. Thank you.”

Yes, I will have to do my best. Jigen-san and the others seemed happy at this. However.. Director.. I still hope to someday see you again.

Chapter 18: Returned Home, Relaxing before Dinner

Eventually thereafter, after short introductory study with Jigen-san and Oriza-san, we parted ways to return to the castle. Since the cottage was closest to the other side of the castle, the path returning home involved completing the circle around the castle. Still, there wasn't much new to regarding passing around the area below the rooms belonging to Father and Saryuu. The cobblestone path going from the cottage was decorated by more tall shurbbery, heading back around the castle to the front entrance.

“Your family deciding to put the cottage so close to the castle, along the side, it was quite an interesting financial decision.”

Alica-san mentioned such, having me consider just how old the cottage might be. I also wondered if the intent was to help reduce the chance of theft for the cottage. A thief we could be prepared for, but it would be harder to deal with a spy or assassin...well, this world has been full of strange things, like sorcery for example.

Anyway, I somehow made it back to my room and involuntarily collapsed on my soft sofa, catching my breath.

“... Heh.. I'm exhausted...”

“Seiren-sama, it seems you need to work on your fitness.”

“It's these shoes. I'm really not used to wearing this kind of footwear, they are difficult to walk in.”

Alica-san seemed troubled, after hearing such an explanation. It was rough, needing to get used to such girl's shoes while walking once around the castle. I was very exhausted. They weren't just girl's shoes, they were high heel shoes specifically, with a very narrow yet long heel leaving me otherwise standing barely on my tiptoes. It was very painful, mostly at the back edge of my calves and feet. After all, back when I was a guy I didn't even wear leather shoes, mostly just cheap sneakers, even to my graduation. Yeah, these shoes here were nothing like sneakers at all.

Minoa-san gave a quick sigh and knelt to my feet. Notably inspecting the foot space within my shoes, she cautiously and considerately felt around the exterior of the shoes, to see what kind of state they were in. Speaking of which, Minoa-san did ask me about my shoe size earlier. She raised her expression deep in thought, carefully considering things.

"I think the size is wrong for your feet, the shoes are fitting very snugly on your feet being so new, and are causing chafing to your skin. I am very sorry for not noticing earlier, I will take care of this immediately."

"Oh, my feet are getting chafed? Oh gosh, I hadn't noticed."

She softly removing the shoe from my foot, letting me see that my akiresukenatari had turned red. I really missed my guy shoes at this point. Well no, it might have been difficult, but I'm certain I will get used to this.

"With new shoes like this, it's very common to have this happen. This will not be difficult to take care of, it won't be a problem. I'm very sorry about all this."

"Oh.. it's alright. Maybe it was just this bad because I'm still not used to

wearing these kind of shoes. I will simply have to be more careful in the future.”

Oh, while getting accustomed to stuff like this, it also seems like this sort of thing is common too. Therefore, I should make sure to be aware of this with future new shoes.

“Minoa, I brought some medicine.”

“Thank you Alica. Seiren-sama, if you will excuse me.”

“Oh, yes, thank you.”

Alica-san came back from a nearby storage closet, rushing back carrying a small tin of strangely colored ointment. They applied a small dab to the wound, then wrapped it up in a cloth stocking. A white container with a tawny brown lid, I was somehow familiar with the ointment that they were using. Minoa-san’s gentle caring hands had applied the ointment, so it only stung for a short time. The ointment being wrapped in white cloth, it was similar to a bandage dressing, even with the edge tucked in at the end.

“For a while now until tomorrow, it might be best to just stick to wearing socks. Then we can get you into properly fitting shoes for you to get used to.”

“Okay, thank you.”

Looking up and thanking both Alica-san for bringing the ointment and bandages, along with Minoa-san for applying them, I was very relieved this was taken care of. Well no, this problem wasn’t over yet. Well, at least the shoe thing was fully addressed.

Anyway, girl shoes, they are seriously going to be a challenge. Every day wearing them, while walking around or doing anything else. Womanhood, in a few ways it was absurdly intimidating. I wonder at this, will I be alright? After all, from now on I won't have another opportunity to simply wear sneakers.

"These shoes, do you think I'll ever get used to them?"

"I know you've been very worried about not adapting to your shoes. From now on, we should look for more opportunities for you to adjust to such high heels."

Guō, Minoa-san declared such so decisively. Wearing these shoes today, I wondered if it might be better if they had a shorter heel. Thinking things through, will everything here after simply be me wearing more of such high heels? Having a heel like a pin, with my heel painfully standing on such precarious footing. Women are just expected to stand composed wearing such, really it's just terrible, but that's just how things are. I'll need to get used to wearing high heel shoes at every opportunity.

"... there is that, or for going out to a party."

"Oh yes. You will need to be able to dance during the parties."

"You... want... me... to... dance?"

Alica-san laughed as she joined the conversation with such a reply, while I involuntarily looked up at the ceiling. Oh wow, I didn't notice yesterday, but there was even an arabesque across the ceiling. No, it's too much, if I had to

wear high heel shoes dancing, I would absolutely certainly fall down. ... well no, actually I think I might like learning how to dance correctly. Heck, I could see a lot of folk dance with such a family, ballroom style. Er, that would mean I would be dancing with a guy's hand firmly held to my waist, his other hand ready to twirl me around. I considered such pleasant thoughts.

“Seiren-sama, is anything the matter?”

“Oh, no, everything is fine Alica-san. I just have a bunch of different things to think about after all this.”

“Such can't be helped. I wanted to inquire earlier, about Seiren-sama living in another world. First of all, is this why you aren't very familiar with everything to do with the Shiya Family?”

Yeah, I've been found out. However, Minoa-san was firm and resolute in making sure this was clarified. After hearing such painful truth, it probably wasn't something I could continue to hide, not any longer. Hmm, Minoa-san was perfectly right in asking this.

“... That is right. I remember it being said that Minoa-san had a really good, soft massage. Could I please have such now?”

“Yes, if you wish.”

Yesterday, both Oriza-san and Alica-san made this claim. Since my feet are so sore, it would be a good time to experience such for myself. Having asked for such an opportunity, I quickly thought it was a good chance in this way for such.

“Now, if you will excuse me.”

After saying such, she went to her knees and put my foot atop my other knee, demonstrating her experience to me for the first time. Of course... actually experiencing her healing motions... yeah...

“Oh, ah!! That feels great!!”

Well, Oriza-san did say I would feel like I had gone to heaven, it was very accurate after all. Massaging with such a miraculous technique, I still felt a little sore but other than that I felt much better than before. Feeling like this, I’m certain I will have a good night’s sleep.

“Seiren-sama, your face, are you in any way uncomfortable?”

“Ah... After Minoa-san’s massage, I’m truly feeling amazing.”

“Oh, thank you.”

I wondered at that, how could my face make me look uncomfortable. Considering such, maybe I had a silly expression because it just felt too good, in some sort of roundabout way. However, to be blessed with such a heavenly massage seemed seriously impossible, absolutely impossible. Going another 3 rounds of massages, my silly expression continued. Ohh... ahh... Minoa-san has some excellent abilities with her arms.

After the massage was completed, Alica-san brought a small bucket. There was steam coming from it, due to the hot water inside.

“Seiren-sama, I’ve brought some hot water. Please rest comfortably so that I can wash your down, since your feet are wrapped in bandages that need to stay dry....”

“Oh.. thank you.”

To relax like this, with my feet both in this state. This really wasn’t the proper place for a bath, this wasn’t would be called the normal every day way to have a bath. It was a bit of an extra luxury, to get washed down clean like this was plenty extravagant. With the bucket kept at my feet, my feet were cautiously washed clean. Oh... I was like a middle-aged man relaxing at a coffee shop, considering the warm expression on my face while I was being cleaned. ... No, the Director wasn’t like that actually... I was just projecting middle-aged man habits. The Director did tell me “You will understand eventually,” though I don’t think I have the form to ever understand such anymore.

“Seiren-sama, it was like I told you. Minoa’s massages feel the greatest.”

“Oh yes, assuredly, there was truth in your stories... Ahh.. I feel so relaxed I could fall asleep.”

Yes, I keep thinking some weird things, the mind works in mysterious ways. Shamefully enough, a yawn unconsciously escaped right after saying such. However, I had other plans.

“Oh, if that’s how it is.”

“This is a problem. It’s very nearly dinner time.....”

Alica-san stayed held a calm composed expression at this, while Minoa-san looked visibly worried. This sort of personal irregularity, I'm not really good with. But I'm so sleepy, it can't be helped.

"Oh.., so I can't fall asleep?"

"Yes we have to get ready.. wait, just a minute.. ..."

"Okay....."

Attempting to answer a troubled Minoa-san, I begun to sway and then collapsed. Later this evening, please wake me up, in time for dinner.... ..

Chapter 19: Fumbling around, with an Evening Dress

My shoulders were being shook lightly. Then I heard it, a familiar voice.

“Blue Lotus. You’ve been sleeping for a long time, it’s time to wake up.”

Uh.. Director, always coming to wake me up at such absurdly early hours. Alright then, just let me sleep a little bit longer.

“Hey, Blue Lotus. You shouldn’t be saying such stuff at this point. Everyone is waiting for you.”

Waiting? Who is waiting for me?

“This is hopeless. Wake up, Seiren!”

“Uh.. !?”

“AHH!!”

Following the strange motion of me drawn back to consciousness, was a small scream. Huh, I still couldn’t see very well, but I think that was Alica-san. I guess I frightened her. So it was just a dream. Director, even coming to wake me in my dreams.

“Seiren-sama, really. Will you please wake up now?”

“.... uh, yeah. Did I startle you? I’m sorry.”

“No, it’s alright.”

Yeah, as I thought. But this ‘being surprised’ was more what I would expect from Oriza-san. Well, I didn’t expect she had such a personality too. wait, what? I was still lying down on the sofa. I was sleeping too deeply to move, probably.

“I... fell asleep?”

“Yes, you slept very soundly.”

“I’m sorry. I’m not certain what happened there.”

Aaargh... it was too much to think about. Well, let’s figure out what happened there. Just before I so completely lost consciousness, I can faintly remember saying I needed to rest. Before that, Minoa-san had given me that heavenly massage... so no, there was no excuse for such.

“I’m back. ... Oh, Seiren-sama, you’ve woken up now?”

Just then, Minoa-san returned as well. In her hands, she carried my old school uniform. If that’s the case then, the box beneath it was my old shoes too. Which is to say, they were finished being cleaned already.

“Oh, yeah. I’m sorry I fell asleep so suddenly.”

“At least it’s good that you’ve woken up again already. Oh, and your old clothes have been taken care of, here you go.”

“Thank you.”

I received the clothes and box from Minoa-san. Oh, and they were properly ironed as well. I was very thankful to have had these returned to me, even if the clothes and shoes were too large a size for me now. I suspect I’ll never have a chance to wear them anymore, but they were still very important to me.

“Is there somewhere I could store these? Somewhere in the back of the closet?”

“Of course, there is space for your precious outfit under the shelving at the back. It was designed to hold a lot of things, so there is plenty of space.”

I went to the location Alica-san mentioned. After opening the door, under the space used to hang dresses, there was a small bracket in the back corner. Pressing and turning it, the handle popped out. Impressive, it had such a gimmick. I grabbed the handle and lifted the drawer free. To think the drawer would pull out like this, set as such, half deep into the chest of drawers. Impressive.

“It’s a very good hiding place, useful to put away anything notably precious.”

“This works out plenty for me. Thank you very much.”

I express my thanks, while carefully putting my uniform and shoes inside. I set my hand one more time over it's surface, in appreciation, very thankful for this kindness.

Resetting the drawer to it's original position, I suddenly realized something. Before all this happened, I was told of a reason why I should not fall asleep.

"Oh, I just recalled. Wasn't it dinner time soon?"

"Ah, that's right. Oh, we still have to get you ready, before dinner time."

"It's alright. I was planning on coming back at this time anyway to wake you from your rest as is."

Recalling such details finally, I then further inquired with Alica-san who was folding away other clothes, rapidly going through all the light fabrics. In contrast, Minoa-san had calmly turned to look at the clock. Ah well, it wasn't quite six o'clock, we still had a bit of time.

"Oh, okay. So we're good for time?"

"Yes, it was just the right timing for you to wake up."

I see, that's great news. Showing up late for dinner, it would have made me feel like an idiot. Anyway, 6 o'clock.. considering that I'm going to need to get changed, that's going to put us at around half past 6, maybe even 7, for having dinner. I got to eat breakfast and lunch rather leisurely, so I guess there was a

lot of time set to spend on eating dinner.

“As quick as possible, I’ll bring some hot water here. After we get your body fully cleaned off, we need to get you set into another outfit and sent off to have dinner.”

“I understand. Itterasshai.”

Alica-san went to prepare the hot water, sparing a glance at Minoa-san in the process. She returning pulling out a stool, and set it before a table. I have to say, how did she stand that mirror on the table? She even placed a huge mirror on that little table.

“So before dinner we have to clean my body, every single day, is that true?”

“Yes, it’s sort of a tradition of your family. In addition to the members of your family present, this is especially important in situations where there are guests over for dinner.”

“I guess that makes sense.”

“Coming into the company of others, it’s important to leave them thinking well of how kireina you are.”

“Is that so?”

So I’m to take a bath before dinner, wasn’t this something I’ve recognized from before? While we had dinner at the orphanage, there was always also an

order to when people had access to hot water for a bath. The smaller kids got a time to go in first, followed afterwards with the larger guys getting their turn together later.

Alica-san returned quickly after with the hot water. I suspect she brought it from the hot water tank I saw yesterday in the bath. It's just, it was quite different having my body cleaned by someone else. From the rinsing to the cleaning, it wasn't me doing any of it. After my whole body was wiped down while resting on the sofa, Minoa-san sat on the stool. Oh, I was worried about how this might impact these soft, expensive cushions. At this point I suddenly shifted my gaze, and caught sight of myself in the mirror before me. The face I saw yesterday evening, originally of a girl, has since unsurprisingly and comfortably formed into a true woman. This was slightly awkward... I lived temporarily as a guy and have since become such a girl, it is slightly amusing thinking about it.

“I've finished getting together your chance of clothes.”

Because my entire body had to be wiped clean, I had to put back on new underwear and clothes. Alica-san had brought a new sort of dress, this one was a deep emerald green. I was to spend the evening wearing such a dress? While wiping my own face dry by myself just now, using a brisk motion out of old habit, Minoa-san's "Please, be a bit more gentle" followed in rebuke. Truly, she had a point, this amount of force was surprisingly a bit painful. I Passed the towel from my neck, down over my shoulders, and over my arms. To fully prepare my upper body, I diligently dried the area which would be covered by a bra. Proceeding further... I also took care of my buttocks and koshimawari. Slipping below that, I flew past my buttocks and took care of my thighs while continuing to my feet. Oh yeah, wasn't this better than the washing I had to go through last night? Or how about when I was stuck in bed with a fever, and the Director had to wipe me down just the same. Actually that left a refreshing feeling, recalling such from that time.

“Do you still feel pain or sore anywhere?”

“Oh no, I’m okay. My foot feels much better.”

“I’m very thankful to hear such.”

I finished up by drying off my toes, trying to be careful because I’m very ticklish.

With that done, I put on a new set of underwear along with the new dress, then my hair was done up properly. This dress, it went down far enough to sweep away my feet, flowing over them with a feeling of... ripples? What could I say, I seemed splendidly beautiful like this. Compared to the time I spent as a guy with my hair extending only to my neck, Minoa-san needed to do a lot just to get my hair up in a bun that felt about as long. Then she topped it off by attaching a hair barrette, tied up with a flowery ribbon.

“Does this look really suit me?”

“There is plenty of selections, so you can choose whatever you feel suits you better.”

“... oh yeah, uh.. thank you.”

Minoa-san response was so decisive, as if in other words, looking like this was perfectly fine. It’s just, looking back at myself in the mirror, to think I would be able to reach as far as being suited for such a look... yeah, it was amazing.

“I’ve also got your socks and shoes here. I made sure to pick a set that was extra soft, but please let me know immediately if they bring you any discomfort while you are walking around.”

“Oh, okay, yeah. So if it starts feeling weird or anything harsh like that.”

The socks, they looked like a deep color of brown that would go up over my knees. And the black shoes Alica-san also brought with them, they were made from a soft cloth. They had a ribbon that tied at my ankles, looking as if it was designed to keep the shoes from falling off. I completed my outfit, also wearing the kekkō socks and shoes that Alica-san selected. Her selection was very similar to Minoa-san and Oriza-san, like they had the same sense of style. I was a little curious about such.

“So then, we should be off, Seiren-sama.”

“Oh, yes.”

Minoa-san and Alica-san each took me by a hand, helping me stand up. By the way, the skirt of this dress seemed to flutter slightly as I moved.

“You seem so pretty dressed that way, Seiren-sama.”

Alica-san declared such so decisively, filled with such obvious confidence. Well, she was the one who chose this outfit. still, to be called pretty, it’s scary how much I’ve grown used to it.

Chapter 20: Decisions Completed, Home Schooling

Dinner, it finished peacefully. Well, kinda peacefully, sorta.

“Uhh.. still tired.”

“Are you still feeling worn out, Seiren-sama?”

“Yeah, a bit.”

I relaxed on the sofa to help with my exhaustion, while Minoa-san spoke as if she couldn't figure out what happened. Yes, dinner itself finished simply enough. Even Saryuu sorta, he looked to be pleasant enough. Regardless, I was very worn out.

I mean, how could I properly adjust to these extravagant dinners, while under his scrutiny? To begin with were small open faced sandwiches, made with various toppings such as cheese placed on a cracker bed, serving as an appetizer. It was served with plenty of consomme soup, containing a generous portion of shioyaki, sliced up and added like it was beef steak cutlets. There was a small sample of citrus sorbet to clean off our palates, followed by what looked like roast beef, as far as I could tell. Then, a fresh vegetable salad was served along with bit of cake for dessert, finally followed with tea.

It seems a lot of this extravagance is to celebrate my return, as it usually wouldn't be expected that they go to such measures for such a lavish feast. Even the dishes used for the meal were clearly much more expensive and lavishing than the ones used earlier for breakfast and lunch, even the knives

and forks were so extravagant. They even swapped out the usual tablecloth and napkins with a matching set that had beautiful patterns on them. It was overwhelming, and just made me more tired. This was on top of concerns regarding displaying proper manners that I was still trying to learn.

“However, this is a good opportunity to adjust to such dinners for the future. It will be important to become familiar with this sort of thing. One day, it won’t just be your own family present at the table.”

“... before that happens, I’ll have to perfect the manners expected of me.”

Of course, Minoa-san was completely correct. After all, one day I should be prepared to be invited to another dinner table too. It was just a lot to deal with, getting accustomed to all these important changes. However, I understand that getting something like proper manners taken care of now will reduce a lot of panic later.

Kan-kan, a light knock could be heard from the door. While Minoa-san was preparing tea, Alica-san was still busy working in the bedroom, so Minoa-san gave a “oh, yes” as she headed for the door. After checking who it was, she quickly turned back to me.

“Please wait a moment, Seiren-sama.”

“Huh? Who is it?”

I thought it was Yuzuruha-san, or maybe even Kaya-san, but it seems neither were accurate.

“Well, it seems the private teacher Kasai-sensei has come to pay Seiren-sama a visit. Would you be interested in such?”

Ah. Well, even though my father had worn me out all dinner with constant conversation, it seems I will have another conversational guest. I was very tired, but this is a conversation I did not want to miss. Certainly.

“Oh, yes, sorry, please welcome her inside.”

“Of course.”

With that, Minao-san went to pass on my invitation to enter. Still sitting at this point, I stood up myself in anticipation of a guest.

“Nice to meet you, Seiren-sama.”

She said such and bowed, her dazzling light brown hair flowing over from the nape of her neck, moving from a height that was fairly close to my own. She was wearing a simple deep blue dress, which didn't offer much exposure. At that point, I also noticed she wore glasses. Not exactly rounded, they were very horizontally long... so then, more like oval glasses? The glasses also seemed to have a very thin frame. I was at a loss regarding her chest. Mine were clearly not as heavy no, I think I was outmatched there.

“My name is Kasai Kuon. I've been charged with teaching the children of the Shiya family, so that they learn proper behavior and manners.”

“Ah yes, I've been told about such before. I heard from my father that I should ask for your help with learning reading and writing, as well as proper

etiquette.”

“Yes. If everything goes well, I will be in charge of such lessons starting tomorrow. Please allow me to guide you with such learning.”

“Thank you very much.”

At that, we both bowed to each other. But at this, I became concerned with what to call her. Earlier I was referring to her grandfather as Jigen-san, so I wonder if I should be using her first name? Usually, I just call people by their last names, but that’s mostly what I learned growing up. At that, I discovered the answer to my question.

“Oh, and since there are the two Kasai here, feel free to just call me by my first name.”

“Ah, so Kuon... -sensei.”

“Yes, that’s correct. Please, feel free to sit down.”

“Oh, excuse me.”

That worked. Okay, it’s decided. I will simply just refer to her as -sensei instead of -san. After all, naturally she’s going to be teaching me. After concluding such, I sat down on the couch, with Minoa-san and Kuon-sensei in front of me. It was at that moment that the tea was ready for me and my new teacher. There were savory cakes that came with the tea, which were truly a treat since it was so close to being after that diner.

“I’m sorry to ask such, but I would like to converse with just the two of us. Would it be fine if your maids were to leave for a time?”

Kuon-sensei made such a request with a bit of a stiff tone. By two people, she was wanting to have a conversation with just me. I wondered what she wanted to talk about. Minoa-san’s brow creases, but she turns an expressionless reply.

“... So then, we can not be present for this conversation?”

“It is a very serious conversation, unfortunately.”

“I understand. Alica, we have to leave for a while.”

“Oh, I will be right there.”

With a light sigh after such, Minoa-san gave up and spoke to Alica-san in the back. Only the two of us, so that means even Alica-san couldn’t stay. Alica-san quickly rushed out, bowing deeply to Kuon-sensei. She then said “excuse me” as she left with Minoa-san.

“Okay..”

I heard the door close with a batan, so then again turned towards Kuon-sensei. A conversation, with just the two of us. I wondered, what was it about?

“Well, uh. First of all, I mean Seiren-sama no harm. Do I have your trust in such?”

Suddenly, for my teacher to say such a thing. It made me feel a bit uneasy, but I made sure to answer quickly.

“Yes, though I myself haven’t seen enough for much certainty.”

“I’m sorry. It was just important to take a moment to start with such declaration.”

I noticed worriedly at this point as she replied, Kuon-sensei’s eyes looked a little like Jigen-san’s. Kuon-sensei’s grandfather, the magician who pulled me from another world. That jisan, I felt he was a very nice person. His granddaughter, I really felt something similar in her eyes. I’ve felt the same trustworthiness before, from people such as Minoa-san or the director. In all consideration, I should just hold on such conclusive thoughts, and just wait for Kuon-sensei to finish speaking.

“With such, being a family teacher for their children, I feel responsible to act as a sort of counselor. I have an obligation to protect your confidentiality, so that helps too.”

Ah, so she is also acting as a counselor. Considering such, both Saryuu and I, we otherwise only have our maids, which might not be the best for such emotional support. No, Saryuu is a guy, all things considered. Being a counselor like this, as Kuon-sensei is trying to do. Would it even be alright, taking care of two people at once by herself?

“For example, what was Seiren-sama’s experiences like in the other world as a guy?”

“Huh?”

So she knew about such a thing. I suspected even the maids did not know about this, and there were only three people present when I had arrived at this world.

“I had heard about such from my grandfather. If at any time you need someone to talk to about such problems, I’ve been assigned to be here to help you with such. Also, I will keep secret anything you share about such problems.”

“... ah. Thank you for your support.”

I guess.. maybe Jigen-san had made such a request of Kuon-sensei, in addition to my lessons. Well, this was a great relief. Moreover, this is very good news. Having Kuon-sensei there for me, an emotional supporter for the unusual experiences I had gone through. It might have all happened due to sorcery, but I still felt that my past had still left me with a lot of things to think about. But, having a friend, someone who I can talk to about all that. I felt working out such confusion would be really good for me.

“Speaking of such, there is something I would like to ask. Regarding such stuff too, if you willing to listen to such a request.”

“Yes, what is it?”

“So I was really born a girl? I mean until just yesterday I had lived 18 years as a guy, so there is a lot that I still uncertain about.”

I could still remember, growing up a guy over 18 years, being named Shikino Seiren. Then without warning yesterday, suddenly I'm a woman named Shiya Seiren. As evident by the ring I had carried, in the bag I had sowed, I was originally a girl. It was a fact I had to accept in simplicity.

"Yes, I have no doubt it's true."

After asking such, Kuon-sensei answered forthright. So that's that. Me, in spite of being born a girl, arrived in the care of the director as a boy, and had to grow up as such. But who caused this, and why?

"I do not know why you had to endure such, nor do I know who was responsible for doing this to you. The Shiya family's security has grown much more strict, because of that incident."

"Also, that's why I've been given three exclusive maids, because of that as well, right?"

"Yes, Saryuu-sama also has three maids attending him. I've not been told many details regarding the security here, but my grandfather did let me know something about that."

Oh, so he also had three maids looking after him. Oriza-san was also very young as far as I could tell, so it might be interesting to meet his own maids sometime. Considering it, what sort of security would Jigen-san have come up with... I was certain about one thing, it would involve sorcery. Oriza-san had said that she was learning magic herself, was that something to do with it?

"While my sofū worked to help this family, I heard stories from him about

what happened. When their only daughter went missing, he was called upon to be part of the investigation as well as to take good care of the family castle's security going forward. I am here helping my grandfather, to help take good care of your family."

"I see... interesting."

Well, one thing still unclear. I vanished from here 18 years ago. Even considering the resulting panic, I wasn't exactly clear why it took them ten years to hire Jigen-san. Thus, Kuon-sensei came with Jigen-san to help, working together to take care of the family. She would have still been fairly young, having to travel together here to help with all of this, that would have been hard on her.

"... Excuse my asking, but exactly how old are you?"

"I'm about twice your age."

"What?"

Kuon-sensei reply, smiling at my gaping expression as I stared involuntarily. Twice my age, that puts her at 36. That has to be a lie, she didn't look anything over her twenties. Not a single wrinkle, with such smooth skin. Her hair so shiny and smooth, I couldn't help but think she was joking about her age.

"Wow, you seemed so much younger than that."

"Oh, thank you very much. Seiren-sama seems skilled with flattery. Is that something you learned during your time as a guy?"

“No no, not at all.”

I never was very good at being all that flattering. For one thing, I wasn't exactly popular enough to even have someone to call a friend. Other than helping the director once and a while, I typically kept to myself doing things like sowing. In that case, maybe, I was just always kept in the dark about such stuff.

Chapter 21: Now Then, Future Problems

... Well then. It's true that I am the daughter of this family, which means I was simply born a girl. A lot happened since then, but now I've returned to such. So then...?

"After all this, I don't know what I should do."

Just now, all my concerns came to surface. No, it's just that my parents were so excited about getting their daughter back, I guess. I wonder, what should I do now? It's a very complicated question, and not one I think I could answer by myself. Kuon-sensei did offer help with such concerns, and I don't think this is something I could expect to talk about with either my parents or my maids. Honestly, I really didn't have anyone else who could help with finding answers for my questions.

"What ... should you do? Normally, your family just does whatever they want to pass the time."

"Normal, as your calling it... Well, I guess at least my family has a guy like Saryuu to inherit the estate."

"Oh, you do not want to be the heir?"

Kuon-sensei paused, gazing at me with intrigue. Well, considering everything, maybe I just didn't think I could become a good heir. It was such an impossible claim. I really didn't see a way, there was no way I could do it.

“I mean really, really.. Saryuu might not get along with me, but don’t you think he is a little more capable of being a better heir?”

“Hmm. In his own way, he does have a lot of determination to remain heir to the Shiya family.”

Considering how much I’ve heard of his poor study abilities, I could tell why his teacher would get a chuckle from that, in a fun-natured way. As I remember, father was talking about him being hard to teach, but I was surprised to discover that Saryuu was even on good terms with his teacher. Father was wrong about what he told me, regarding Kuon-sensei. No matter how hard I try, I just wouldn’t be able to keep up. Even being the older sister and such, for all sake and purpose, I’m just an outsider who showed up much later. So then, what should I do?

“Hmm. Well as an alternative to being family heir, the idea of marrying into another household is a very normal thing for a daughter of your status.”

“Marrying... so, I’m to get married?”

... As a woman, on top of everything. And if I become heir, Saryuu would be married off like that instead.

“Of course. The Shiya family has royal blood as you know, right?”

“Well.. I was told that a while ago. I did hear that we were like a few dozen or so from the line to the throne, though.”

“True. However, having such royal blood in you at all is still important. Having such at all, it means that you will traditionally have to marry with a neighboring lord to keep the bloodline going.”

So that’s that. Even though I’m only a descendant along a distant branch of the royal family, I will still be expected to become a wife of another lord to keep the bloodline going. Seriously, even being a bit distant of a branched family. After all, even if it was tens of thousands in line from the throne, this would still be important.

“Ahhh... so the guy would have what is called a political marriage. Yeah, I remember this sort of thing from history classes in the world I grew up in. So it would be like that.”

“History classes?”

“In the other world, where I was only an orphan, it was normal for marriages to be out of love. However, I did learn that political marriages occurred long before then from stories I read.”

I gave a shrug, as Kuon-sensei coughed once she figured out the truth of my past. Was it so unexpected, that the world I had grown up from would be so vastly different than this world? No well.. I guess that would have only been a distant idea.

“... I’m sorry. So that’s how it was?”

“It’s alright. Travelling from another world, I came to understand that there are many things that are different.”

“Such a flexible way of thinking. I’m a little envious of such.”

I wondered at that idea. When you’ve only experienced one world, it just seems common sense that things would change in another. It’s just... I’ve just sorta been trying to adapt to this world. I’ve only been here for a day. Was it maybe expected that since I was born here, that I would be easily familiar with everything?

“Well, anyway.. I guess this would mean that someday I will have to marry some rich lord, at some point. Oh wow..”

In truth, I was struggling with the reality of it all, honestly. Working things out with Saryuu was troublesome as is, I had plenty of things to resolve for myself. Still being a guy on the inside, having to get used to being called someone’s wife, it was an idea that was quickly shattering my confidence. Also, in addition to getting married I would be essentially then required to bear a child.... It was way too much for me. Ugh... ugh... ugh...

“Woah woah, please calm down, Seiren-sama. That won’t be happening anytime soon.”

Kuon-sensei rushed to her feet, giving a pon-pon tap to my shoulder. Well yeah, if I was told that my wedding was like tomorrow, I would have plenty of reason to be upset. Indeed, that would be my parents expecting too much.

“I know you will be eventually married to a wonderful guy. But before then, I would expect you to take at least one year and spend that time here becoming familiar with your current self and to your family’s customs. Of course, I know this is your parent’s desire as well.”

“... I see. That’s good to know.”

Hahaha, I gave a sigh of relief, as I sunk deep into the couch. Seriously good to know this sort of thing, generally speaking, mostly at least. At minimum, I want to get used to this body. The underwear I need to wear.... At least I want to be able to put on my own bra, all by myself. I’m not certain how well I’ll be able to adapt to being a girl, but I know at least I am the daughter of my parents.

Ah, I understand.

“Even though I disappeared soon after I was born, my father and mother will want to at last live along side their daughter for a while. To spend a bit of time as a parent and child, getting along happily together.”

Because the director was always there for me, I managed well enough. My parents might have had Saryuu, but they still searched for me while taking care of him. They really wanted back their daughter, who disappeared so quickly after being born. So then, even though we’ve lost 18 years together, my parents at least wanted to spend a bit of time living along side their daughter.

“Above all it is good that you understand how the duke-sama and his wife feels, but I think first off we need to correct how you speak.”

Ore considered it quickly, what Kuon-sensei might potentially be talking about. It was never brought up so far, but maybe no one else was willing to mention it. Of course.

“.... oh, even now, is there something wrong with how ore speak?”

“Of course. As the eldest daughter of the Shiya family, you need to speak like a refined woman.”

She smiled bitterly. Understanding, my face stiffened. No well, my word usage was very normal just over a day ago, considering I was expected then to speak as a guy would. It's the “ore” that is a problem now.

“Please give me some time. At any rate, I... well, things only changed so recently.”

“I understand. Regardless, your speech needs to become a bit more tender, please remain conscientious of it.”

“... .. will be careful. So while in public, it is better to say “watashi” instead, right?”

Yup. Being completely conscious on how it looked to others, a woman using such a version of “I” is probably giving everyone strange impressions of me. After all, this is probably something that shocked Saryuu at first. Without using the more formal expression, it completely comes off as a masculine expression. It was very wrong, when spoken from such a feminine face.

“You won't adjust until you make it your normal expression. What I'm trying to say is, Seiren-sama has to adjust away from working with such masculine expressions, so that your ordinary usage of such a masculine “I” is abandoned completely.”

At Kuon-sensei's reply, I tensed up for a moment. Such masculine stuff, at

least in my mind I was still able to think as a guy, being able to use such expressions. Possibly for me, it was all I had left. It is kinda hard, looking as I am now, I just seem like a masculine girl. In the other world I was a very effeminate guy, but here I'm instead a very masculine girl... I wonder why.

"... .. thank you for the kind advice. Please, pardon me for my upbringing."

"Well, how you express yourself is a pretty big deal. With plenty of work, I'm certain you will look exactly as a noble daughter should."

Really? At least for Kaya-san, I know that would mean problems. Oh... also... I considered quickly, this could have a significant impact on who is declared heir. No, that might rush things towards marriage talks. Such might be too much for my over-protective parents to deal with properly.

No really, I should be careful. After all, this is my life now.

"Okay. Maybe this is a good point to stop for now, if that is alright?"

At that, Kuon-sensei turned from me, hitting the table with her fingers in the process. The teapot swayed slightly at the impact, with a bit of mist escaping as a result.

"Oh, yes. Thank you very much. Would you like some more tea, even if by now it might have gone a bit cold?"

"No, please excuse me for tonight. I should be heading back now if that is alright."

With that it seems the conversation was over. Kuon-sensei called outside the room, and immediately Alica-san and Minoa-san returned through the opened door. Both of their expressions looked rather awkward, so I wondered what had happened. Maybe because it was just my teacher and I here, the two of us without any supervision. Ignoring the two of them for now, I turned to ask a final question of my teacher.

“Are we still having class tomorrow afternoon?”

“Yes, if you would be so kind. Are you still available at that time?”

“Yup. I look forwards to attending Kuon-sensei’s lessons, as I am excited to be able to learn as much as possible.”

My schedule, as I understood it I didn’t really have one myself. When I checked with the maids, Minoa-san nodded her agreement. I mean, that was another thing I had to adapt to. If I wanted to check my schedule, I would have to inquire with my maids. For the time being, it seems like I will still get to attempt the lessons tomorrow, so I bowed lightly with a bit of relief.

“Thank you. So then, I will be looking forward to your class tomorrow.”

“Of course. Well Seiren-sama, if you will excuse me.”

With an elegantly refined bow at the door, Kuon-sensei left.hmm, the way she bowed like that, I wonder if I could possibly ever pull it myself. Such gentle movement, such was very lady-like how she just did it.

“Oh, Seiren-sama?”

“Hmm?”

Catching me still staring at the door, I heard Minoa-san’s nervous voice. Alica-san seemed to have finished seeing Kuon-sensei off, and started cleaning up what remained of the tea. Maybe, it was only that Alica-san felt more comfortable this way, simply focusing at the task in front of her.

“So, did everything go well? I mean, all the various things you talked about.”

“Oh ...”

“No, such matters of the future are for another time, Minoa-san should not worry herself over conversations she wasn’t part of.”

“..... Please excuse me.”

Minoa-san lowered her head. I watch carefully from the side, as Alica-san scolded her. As I suspected, this wasn’t the sort of conversation I could have with my maids. And since I’m a woman now, even a guy like Saryuu, it would be far too difficult to discuss such with him as well.

Even so, I’m sure a lot more will happen in this world. I will simply have to adapt to the ways of this world, and just get used to it. I even have help from my parents, from my maids, from Jigen-san, and from Kuon-sensei.

This is the world I was born in, no, not the world where I grew up in

previously as Shikino Siren, but here as Shiya Siren.

Chapter 22: Noisily, One Week Later

Minoa-san opens the sliding storm shutter—or rather, the louver door. After I gently washed my face with the bucket Oriza-san prepared, I lightly bent myself at the opened window and my eyes met with my younger brother who's under the window.

“Saryuu.”

“Ah, Seiren-neesama.”

Saryuu was swinging his wooden sword wholeheartedly but upon seeing me, he suddenly stopped his hands. He slightly bowed his head to me who waved my hands.

“Good morning, is it already at this hour?”

“Good morning. That's right, you'd better quickly return.”

“Understood. Well then, excuse me.”

“Yes. See you at dining room—”

After seeing off my younger brother who ran after correcting his posture firmly, I nodded.

My younger foster brother's early morning self-practice has been continuing ever since we found out about it. I haven't told our parents and the maids, and he seems to notice it as well.

It seems now is the sign to close the louver door in my room that was opened. Looks like it has become a daily routine for him to return to his room after exchanging greetings with me, and then preparing himself to get breakfast. The maid who is accompanying Saryuu had a talk to my maids about it. As I thought, it has been exposed completely, eh.

“It has completely become a habit, eh? Morning greetings with Saryuu-sama.”

After tidying up the bucket, Oriza-san who is preparing my clothes seems like she is having fun. Today is Alica-san's holiday, and Minoa-san is making up the bed.

“Isn’t it fine? ...or rather, how did he measure time before I returned here anyway?”

“It looked like Saryuu-sama returned after hearing his attendants’ voices looking for him, didn’t it?”

Oy, oy.

This maid-san completely knows what Saryuu has been doing, doesn’t she?¹

Even though if this were the other world, then you’d be able to measure time by setting an alarm in a watch or cellphone.

“There is no clock in a carriable size over here, eh?”

“Yes-. There is no clock that can be worn conveniently on the wrist like what Seiren-sama said, by any means...”

flap flap Oriza-san who shook her hand made me think again that this world is really different.

The smallest clock here is a table clock whose size is bigger than 2 liter PET bottle. Moreover, it is insanely tall, and I was told that it was approximately as tall as my father’s private room.²

There is also a type of clock that operates on magic power, but it seems to be very expensive, at a price level that is not a joke, as expected. In addition, it is said that time is not easy to adjust and can deviate easily unless it is adjusted according to people who use it and according to the environment. It is very troublesome, in many ways.

Well then.

One week has passed ever since I, Shikino Seiren—let me revise that, Shiiya Seiren came to this world.

By the way, 1 week is 7 days, and 1 year is 364 days. 4 weeks equal to 28 days and one month, as it makes up 12 months and the remaining 4 weeks are added to the 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th month as a special week, so it seems. One year here is a bit shorter than the other world’s.

At first, there is only the Sun God in this world, and being all alone and feeling

lonely, the God created the sky, the earth, and the living beings. The day where there was only God is the first day of a week, a day of Sun (Sunday). And after that, the (day of) sky, the earth, the sea, the mountain, the rain, and the last day where the living beings came into life is the day of life.

There is a proper calendar or almanac, but since the number of days in a month and year can exactly be divided by seven, it is not necessary to think about what day is it next year, or what day of the week is it going to be like in the other world. In other words, there is no need to renew the calendars, and in rich houses just like mine, it seems like a tradition to have a luxurious calendar hanging and decorating the wall.

In our situation, each room is decorated with a not-so-big, but one year's worth of a calendar, that is sized around 1 tatami. Because of the fabric, if you didn't know it was a calendar, then you wouldn't get it. I also did not notice it at first.

Also, there was a huge calendar sized around two tatami mats on the wall between the ceremony room's walls. I am told that when I was born, my parents made a special order to the artisans to weave my birthday in golden string. Of course, by the time it was completed, I was no longer in this house, though.

Upon hearing that, I quickly had to take a look. Day 19th of the 3rd month, the day of the Mountain, was in golden. The day I returned to this world was the exact same day. Whether it was a coincidence or whatever it was, it happened on the same day here and there.

In other words, I was reborn in this world on my 18th birthday. By the way, my birthday in the other world was the 1st day of April. I wonder if the director is still looking for me?

Well now.

Thanks to Jigen-san, the me who disappeared in the middle of Shiiya family's residence was finally returned as the rightful daughter of the family. Except for the fact that I was a male, then all is well.

Then, what kind of existence am I outside the residence?

[Soon detected with an illness after her birth, the eldest daughter of Shiiya family who was recuperating in the deep of the mountains until very recently] like that. Since being abducted from the feudal lord's family might bring about various problems. Or rather, since when did that rumor spread around? Everyone in the residence has been ordered to keep silent regarding my abduction and so on, as Jigen-san said, "We just saw to it that they do not want to talk about it." The old magician comfortably laughed, but I wonder what did he do.³

I can explain well why my "recuperation" became the reason to adopt Saryuu. It was because they did not know when will their sickly daughter die, and so they needed to adopt a healthy boy from their relatives to take over as the heir.

Well, since that daughter—me—have returned to my parents' home after making a full recovery, it cannot be helped that the problem about the heir or the problem regarding my marriage would arise. But, I don't care about being the heir, okay?

While trying carefully to not be worried about such circumstances, I spent my time while gradually being able to write my own name using this world's alphabets that are similar to Roman alphabets, to not spread my legs when I sit down and got scolded.

Ah, also to be able to call myself with "watashi" whenever I am going out. For the time being, I am pardoned when it's only in front of my family and the maids. The habits from my time as Shikino Seiren haven't faded out yet.

With various things going on, this morning too, I have breakfast with everyone. Sometimes, Saryuu would look at me, and I get happy whenever my smiles get returned. Could it be that this younger foster brother of mine is having a siscon (sister complex) on me? Although I do not think that I have any likeable factor...

In the middle of the meal, my mother talked to me with a very wide smile on her face.

"Ah, that's right, Seiren. Later today, I will send Kaya to get you, so I wonder if you could come to my room?"

"Ah, yes. What can I do for you?"

Uwa, the one who will come to get me is Kaya-san, so I thought while I asked mother in return. My face doesn't turn weird, does it?
I am sorry, but it's difficult for me to deal with Kaya-san. For you see, she sees me with the eyes that seem to be testing me. Like I said, I understood that Saryuu is more suited to be the heir than I am.
Even though I am favored by mother and the maids, there is really nothing special to say, though.⁴

"Yes. It's just that today, Coda the jeweler⁵ is coming. And that is why, I am thinking of buying something for you."

"Eh, for me?"

"Yes. You should decide what you'll wear for yourself."

"Haa... the jeweler, eh..."

...In that instant, I became dizzy.

The ones called as the jewelers are people who have various colored gems and gold accessories lined up inside their bag and the ones who ask, how about this one..., that kind of person, right? Oh well, the things they sell are expensive, so it's no wonder they would come to rich houses.

I wonder what if they are assaulted by some burglar en route? In this kind of world, things like insurance won't work. If it is like the same old story, then usually the merchants are traveling around with some guards.

"I am sure there will be some things that will suit Neesama!"

"Oh my, Saryuu. Do you understand about jewels and precious metals?"

"Ah, no, I don't really..."

What are you doing, man. Nah, even I do not really understand about them.

In my room, there are various accessories en masse. But, they were all the things chosen by my mother, and since she chose it before I returned, she did not know whether they suited me or not. Although I will not know about it even if I were to wear them.

Also, since I was a man in the other world, I am not so accustomed to wearing accessories. Well, I am alright since the maids are the ones who put the hair

clips for me. Look, such as this necklace and this ring.

“I will also buy good brooches and pins for Saryuu, as well. But unless we ascertain the items ourselves, we might get some poor quality goods, you know?”

“...Yes, Kaa-sama.”

Ah, so overwhelming.

Well, certainly it is not good if we cannot make a judgement of things. Even if I said that, I wonder how can we have those kinds of discerning eyes. I have no choice but to deal with a large number of them.

After breakfast, Oriza-san and the others followed mother's talk. Oriza-san said as if she was having fun, “Seiren-sama, please choose something cute.” Minoa-san also laughed a bit, so I wonder if women like to see those kind of things.

In the middle of my writing practice inside my room, there was a knocking sound. Minoa-san moved silently and opened the door. Oriza-san did not move and gazed at the surroundings.

After having a few words of conversation outside the door, Minoa-san looked back over here.

“Seiren-sama. Kaya-san has come for you.”

“Ah, yes. It's fine.”

That was fast. While wondering whether the jeweler has arrived, I wiped off the ink from the pen nib. By the way, I am using a quill pen whose head is made of a huge bird feather along with a normal black ink. No, I do not know how to make the ink, though.

“Excuse me. As per Madame's instruction, I have come to escort Seiren-sama.”

“Alright, I will go now.”

While I answered Kaya-san, Oriza-san moved simultaneously. She went before me and extended her hand to help me stand up.

To the standing me, Kaya-san added, “Ah”, as if she just remembered something. I became a little bit flustered, thinking that I might be forgetting something.

“Seiren-sama. I was told to tell you to bring the amulet pouch that you had when you returned here.”

“...The amulet pouch?”

You mean, the one where I put my ring in? When I sleep, I keep it at the bedside, other than that, I usually carry it around, so there is no problem.

Although it is bad if you forget to mention the message from mother. It’s good that you remembered, yes.

“I understood. Since I am carrying it around, we can go right away.”

When I answered in consent, Kaya-san bowed her head, feeling relieved.

Notes :

¹ The original Japanese is : サリュウんこのメイドさん、分かっててやってるだろ、それ。

² The original Japanese is : しかもめちゃくちゃ高いから、うちでも父さんのプライベートルームにあるくらいじゃないかとも言われたよ。

³ The original Japanese is : 俺の拉致とかに関しては屋敷の皆には緘口令が敷かれてる上に、ジゲンさん曰く「喋りたくないようにしてありますじゃ」だそうだ。楽しそうに笑ってたけど魔術師の爺さん、何かやったのかね。

⁴ The original Japanese is : 母さんやこっちのメイドさんたちの目があるから、特に何か言ってくることはないけどさ。

⁵ Edited after reading the next chapter’s context!

Changed “brother-in-law” to “foster brother” to keep up with the real context~

Chapter 23: First Time Meeting the Jeweler

Together with Oriza-san and Minoa-san, I followed Kaya-san to visit my mother's room.

This is not my first time, but I'm still nervous. Particularly because today, there is a new person that I'll be meeting for the first time.

"Please pardon me. Madame, I have brought Seiren-sama with me."

"Ah, you have come. Now now, please come in!"

"Yes. Pardon my intrusion."

After receiving permission, we come in. Uwa-, there's a radiant sparkles on top of the table. Be it gold, metal, or other jewelries, they were of a world unrelated to me.

Well after all, in this kind of era, jewelry shops are linked with rich people only, right. I may be prejudiced, though.

My mother is sitting on the sofa behind the table. On this side, there is an oji-san who seems to be younger than Yuzuriha-san, with somewhat a petite built, yet solid body. In contrast to his slightly diluted chestnut-colored hair, his eyebrows and mustache are thoroughly tufty. Is this person the jeweler?

"Oh my, is this the rumored young lady?"

"Yes, she is my daughter, Seiren. Seiren, he is Coda¹ the jeweler, who I talked about this morning."

Coda-san who my mother just introduced, suddenly stands up and is walking briskly until he is right in front of me.

He bends his body and takes my hand. Aa, uu... speaking honestly, this kind of situation is really embarrassing!

"I'm Coda, pleased to be your acquaintance. I heard the rumor about young miss' return from Madame, but this would be my first time meeting you like this. What's more, you are such a lovely young lady."

“Ah, haha, thank you very much. I’m Seiren, please treat me well.”

I’m trying to smile back in return. Perhaps, the corner of my mouth has become stiff.

Eh. The hand that I grasped, rather than a merchant’s hand, it looks more like a craftsman’s hand. Could it be that he made the things he sell by himself?

“...Uhm. Excuse me, but are you also the one who produced these?”

“Oh, you seem to know it... Ah, I apologize for my rough hand. The Coda family, for generations, are all jewel artisans.”

“So that’s the case. The hand of working people... I like it. I can feel the accumulation of time and skills.”

“Thank you very much for your generous words.”

Ow, dangerous, dangerous. I almost said “ore”. Is it better if I don’t talk too much, I wonder?

Coda-san is a person who speaks vigorously, but I wonder if all merchants are like him? Or rather, has all the business talk been fully open?²

By the way, Kaa-san, the rumors about me... what did you actually talk about?

“Ne, isn’t she a good child?”

“Yes. She is a wonderful young lady, Madame.”

...In any case, I do not think that it is a bad rumor, so it’s alright.

Also, Kaya-san, I do not fully understand your feelings, but please do not look at me with those shady eyes! Since it’s in the public, you should at least feign friendliness. Oriza-san and Minoa-san, too, please do not compete with Kaya-san~!

And then, Kaa-san beckoned me. I obediently go ahead and sit down next to her as encouraged. Coda-san also returned to his former seat, and then Kaa-san inquired me.

“So, did you properly bring your amulet pouch?”

“Yes. This... or rather, it’s about the content of this pouch, right?”

I open the pouch which is usually attached to my waist and take out the small

ring. When I show the ring that I put on the palm of my hand, both Kaa-san and Coda-san leaned their bodies forward. After awhile, they open their eyes widely.

“Oh, this is...”

“As I expected, you remember it quite well. This is the ring that I ordered your father to make, for Seiren’s sake. I would like this to be made into an ornament that could be worn on Seiren’s neck.”

“I see. By having the chain, it could be made into a necklace.”

Ah, Coda-san, what are you so delightful for? I see, it’s because you’re able to see the work which your dad made after awhile, huh.

“This ring was made by Coda-san’s father, correct?”

“Yes. Currently, my father is immersing himself in jewel manufacturing in the workshop, but in the past, he used to produce and sell jewels as well. That father of mine poured all his heart to create the prized item for Shiiya family’s daughter.”

I see. Now that I remember, he did mention about being jewel artisan for generations. Both parent and child sure are working hard.

The ring that has always been with me for my 18 years “genderbend”-ed life in the other world, the ring that my mother and father gave me, the ring which Coda-san’s father made.

I have always been carrying it as an amulet, but considering the fact that I am a female, wearing it as a pendant doesn’t seem to be out of place. That way, I won’t have to worry about dropping it.

“Un, I think it’s alright to be prouder about it. After all, this is an important amulet that also became the evidence when I returned to this house.”

“Oh, what generous words... my father will surely be delighted.”

Really Coda-san, he is now smiling very happily. Nah, I think the ones who are the most delighted would be my parents.

But really, I am thankful for the lovely ring. If I have the chance to meet Coda-san’s father, I have to properly convey my gratitude directly to him.

Also, can my words really be the reason why he is so happy? I only stated my honest impressions, though.

“Well then, please take a look. These are the chains for necklace, I have gathered the excellent ones over here.”

Coda-san who is extending his hands at the accessories he brought by himself, by no means he is not lying. This and that too, even by only looking at it, I understand that they are all the things that were produced with a lot of care. Chains that are carefully knitted with thin gold threads, parts that are neatly combined and so on.

So, after thinking about various things, in the end, I chose a chain knitted with a simple white gold thread. Attached with a small ring, the chains strangely look gaudy. Ah, but the color of the thread knitted differs little by little, as it is hit by the light, and it is really pretty.

Oriza-san puts the metal fitting behind my neck by spreading the chain through the ring from behind me. There is an excess chain, but when I fasten it, I can adjust the length just fine. Besides, when it comes to adjusting the necklace so it can be more suitable to the attire I am wearing, I can just easily readjust the length and match it with the outfits.

Let's confirm how it looks like in the mirror. Un, shouldn't it be fine if it feels just like a normal short necklace in general? Honestly, I don't know whether it suits me or not.

“Well well, you look lovely, Seiren. As expected of my daughter, for choosing an excellent thing.”

“Yes, it really matches the trait of a young lady who does not really adorn herself. Furthermore, it only amplifies your beauty and it is able to complement Milady very well, I am so glad.”

“Eh, ah, yes. Thank you... very much.”

To be praised without any restraint like that, rather than feeling happy, I feel awkward and it feels so embarrassing. Well, I do not mind it from mother, since I get that she is a doting parent.

I wonder if I need to get used to this kind of business talk by someone like

Coda-san? I hope my face won't get too stiff, though. Come to think about it, my face has been hot since earlier, I wonder if I'm still alright?

If normal girls get complimented like this, will they become happy? Since I did not have that many friends, I wonder if that's why I am bad at handling compliments? Wouldn't it be a problem if you overstate your true intention?³

[T/N : Seiren, you wonder too much XD]

Besides the chain for necklace, I also buy one more thing.

Along with the ring, there is also a small blue stone embedded in it. Therefore, I chose to buy a simple ring decorated with a stone of the same color.

My finger became thinner after changing into a woman. In order to cover the joint so it doesn't really stand out, I decided to put a ring and the result made me satisfied.

"It might be a little late, but this is for your 18th birthday present. Since it has the same colored stone as your old ring, you won't find any difficulties in matching them, right?"

"Oh. What a good year it is. Happy birthday, Milady."

Or rather, it was mother who bought it for me. Coda-san also put it into his consideration and he seemed to give us a discount. Even so, it is still a price that can make you roll your eyes, I think.

Also, the unit of the money is called leno, but honestly I don't really understand about its rate. Anyway, since I do not go out to buy daily necessities and food over here, so I cannot really make a comparison about their price in this world compared to the other world. Well, next time let's try asking Kuon-sensei regarding the cost of food and other things!

"Thank you very much, Kaa-san. Coda-san, too."

"Don't mention it. Since there is not much I can do for my daughter, I am also glad."

"No problem, since selling jewels is my job. I am looking forward for your continued patronage."

At any case, when I expressed my gratitude over the presents I received, my mother slightly shook her head and Coda-san replied while giving his business smile.

...which reminds me, there was a talk about me having a wet nurse. In other words, the childcare was taken care by another person, obviously.

If that is the case, then usually the things that wealthy mothers do for their children involve buying things and drinking tea together, things like that.

Things like this are really amazing, for wealthy people.

“Besides, you also told Coda, right? That you have been properly carrying the ring along, and that’s also why I understand that you’re such an adorable daughter. I cannot thank you enough for that.”

“Since it is a precious amulet for me, so I have always cherished it.”

Yes, I really cherish both of them.

The ring that I received 18 years ago, and also the ring that I received today, they are both precious amulets for me.

Afterwards, Coda-san returned after drinking a little tea, or rather, it was time for him to go for his next business. After all, there is no way that we are his only clients.

“Well then Madame, Milady. Please excuse me.”

Coda-san then bowed his head deeply. ...ah, I did not notice it before, but there is a part of his hair that gets darker, it looks like of a Kappa’s. Sorry, but since it does not escape my mouth, I hope you can forgive my thoughts!

“Thank you, Coda. The next time you come here, please bring things that will match Saryuu. Kaya, please escort him.”

“Thank you very much, Coda-san.”

“Things that will suit the young master (Bocchama), I understand. Well then, please excuse me.”

“Please excuse me, I shall go now, Madame.”

Kaya-san closes the door after bowing. After confirming that, Kaa-san turned

around to face me. Eh, her face seems a bit troubled. What's wrong?

"Kaya, she doesn't seem to be very fond of you, does she"

"Eh"

She found out.

Minoa-san and Oriza-san who are at the back do not seem to react that much. Looks like they have also realized about the fact that mother had found out. Well, the maids who accompany Saryuu and Alica-san also knew, so it seems that they are all sensitive regarding this matter.

How should I put it, it seems like according to my mother, I am a bit insensitive about things like this. This is what she says next.

"Well, Seiren. If I properly observe your expression and behavior, it will be so obvious. You put up a lot of guard in front of Kaya, don't you? Minoa and Oriza too, it's terrible, isn't it?"

"...yes."

"Yes..."

Minoa-san answered with expressionless face, but unexpectedly Oriza-san responded by nodding her head and openly showed her discontent. When I scold her with "Hey (Kora)!", her expression returns to normal. After that, I turned to my mother.

"Ah, no. It's not that Kaya-san hates me, but she's just too fond of Saryuu, I think."

"Well, there's that, too. After all, Saryuu's wet nurse is Kaya's little sister."

"Ah. So it's like that, huh."

So there is also something like that.

That Kaya-san's little sister raised Saryuu. So in another words, Kaya-san views Saryuu as someone who's like her nephew. Well that explains why Kaya-san is really fond of Saryuu.

My mother looks puzzled at me who let out a sigh, and then she put her hand to her cheek and tilted her head in confusion. When she gestures like that, my

mother looks very charming. While wondering whether it is because she was well-raised, my mother continues the conversation.⁴

“At any rate, this is very troublesome. To me, both Seiren and Saryuu are my adorable children.”

“Ahaha. I don’t really understand if I am really adorable or not, but for me, Saryuu is my adorable little brother.”

“Seiren is also adorable, you know. If you say that to Saryuu, he will surely be happy. I hope you can get along well with him, that child is really hard-working, even if he doesn’t normally show it.”

I am at a loss of words upon seeing my mother who said that with a wide smile over her face. Oi, little brother, could it be that mother has also found out about your independent training in the morning?

That’s right, little brother.

How to put it, but back then at the institution, there was also a time when I had friends who were like my little brothers and big brothers, and I felt like having brothers and sisters who surrounded me, but in the end, they were just “like siblings” to me.

Compared to them, Saryuu is really my little brother. From the beginning, he is my relative who’s related to me by blood, but there is something much more than that. I don’t really know what makes it different, so I cannot say it, but yeah. He is my little brother.

“That’s right. If Kaya says something uncalled for, then please tell me or your father without any reserve. Although I think it would be fine since she has been working for Shiiya family for so long.⁵”

“Yes. I think it will be alright, too.”

Something uncalled for, eh. To specifically say, I think there’s nothing like that.

After all, she said that the right heir of Shiiya family should be Saryuu—it wasn’t something uncalled for, right? If there is someone who complains about various things, that person would be the mastermind behind a family strife,

right? It's no joke!

“Minoa, Oriza. You too, please be careful. After all, Seiren really takes after both me and my husband.⁶ Please convey this to Alica, too.”

“Understood.”

“I understand. I will make sure to properly convey it to Alica-san~!”

Wha-. Kaa-san, you put too much pressure on the maids!

Anyway, do I really take after my parents that much? I am completely unaware about it.

Notes :

¹ after reading the context of this chapter, I realize that Coda is the name of the jeweler! I have edited the previous chapter as well.

² If anyone has a better suggestion for this line, I'd be glad to revise it! The original Japanese is : つか、営業トーク全開ってところか。

³ Again, if there is a better suggestion for this part, I'd be glad to edit it : 本音を言い過ぎるのも、問題なんだろうなあ。

⁴ 育ちがいいからなのかなあと思いつつ、会話に応じる。

⁵ To further explain this sentence, it would probably mean that since she has been working for their family for so long, she should not be saying something uncalled for to Seiren.

⁶ I don't know but it seems so out-of-context, or is it just me who cannot read the implication? Here is the original Japanese sentence : セイレンてば、どうも私や旦那様によく似ちゃったみたいだから。

Chapter 24: Soon, The Spring Harvest Festival

From that afternoon, Kuon-sensei's lessons started and would become a routine. Minoa-san left the room to do some works related with laundry, while Oriza-san brewed some tea.

However, the topic of the conversation we are having is not about the tea or the sweets, it is regarding the accessories that my mother bought for me. As I thought, women really love these kinds of things after all, eh.

"It's cute, Seiren-sama. It is not that flashy, yet it suits you so well."

"Uwa, even Kuon-sensei thought so? Ah, thank you very much."

"Seiren-sama, the accessory is pretty simple but it totally looks great on you-. I'm surprised-."

"I, is that so?"

I'm begging you, please don't praise me using the stereo. It becomes troublesome for me to give any response this way.

Ah, by the way, at first, it's just the bigger ring on the necklace chain, but now I also put the smaller ring together on the necklace chain. Thinking that during the time I write, it will be bad if the ring gets in the way and gets dirty by the paper or pen, Minoa-san gives this idea to me.

"The colors of the stones are the same, so they can be worn as a set?"

Eh, is this what people call by gaining popularity after trying to do something? Yup, this really feels good. I wonder if the big ring feels more standing out? It would be good if the two rings hanging look just like one thing hanging.

From now on, it would be good to do this kind of thing as much as possible. Since I was not used to wearing rings, I feel like there's a subtle heavy feeling on my finger. Nah, I have to get used to it soon, so let's try to keep the ring on during meal time.

So, after the stereo got turned off, I asked about the price of food that I was concerned about the other day. Ah, the Shiya family cannot be any reference,

so I'm trying to ask about the range of price that Kuon-sensei knows.

"The price, is it?"

"Yes. Since I don't understand the value of the money used here. I think I'd like to use that as references."

To my question, Kuon-sensei murmured a little, "That's right." The answer that came out was a bit different from what I was expecting.

"...Let's put aside the price of trivial things. Let see, for example, the food expenses for me and my grandfather that's taken care here, it should cost approximately 30,000 ieno per month?"

"The food expenses is 30,000?"

Then, one person costs 15,000 ieno per month. If I remember correctly, it costed me 10,000 a month on television, but it certainly also included the cost of heat and electricity. If the meal costs 15,000 then it's 500 per day, isn't that a little bit too cheap?

"I see. About Sensei's current salary... err, is it alright if I ask that?"

"I don't mind. Since I'm a live-in employee, the cost of residence, meal, and energy was all covered by Shiiya family, so considering that, I approximately earn about 500,000 ieno."

"Well, the food is cheap, so that's why the salary is that much, I think."

Somehow, I feel like various things such as clothing cost or bonus were discussed too. I don't hear it well, though. It cannot be helped, after all we can't be fully concentrated during the time when we go into details for such things.

"Because agriculture is prosperous in the Shiiya territory, we have a lot of dairy products, but there's not much meat product, though."

"Ah, understood. At this rate, I think I'll be able to remember and get used to it soon. Thank you very much."

"Don't mention it."

To put it simply, there's no need to think too much since there is a little difference between this world and the other world's. Perhaps I need to take

into consideration about the food expenses, it's a level cheaper than the price I'm used to, so at a reduced cost, we can already eat plenty of delicious food.

After the discussion about money is over, I take a look at today's writing. Somehow I managed to write my own name, and also simple sentences and what's the next digit. Simple sentences, such as "this is a pen (でいすいずあぺん)*".

"You are considerably quick in remembering how to read and write. The letters you wrote have also become more tidy."

I'm happy that Sensei praised me. But, there are still parts marked in red, requiring correction. Since there are letters that look quite similar to one another, let's not get overenthusiastic and mistake those letters. I have to be careful.

"Ah, thank you. Well, they resemble one of the letters I was used to in the other world."

"Ara, is it a world that uses several kinds of letters?"

"It depends on the country. In my place, there were a few letters used, generally we used 3 to 4 kinds of letters."

"Maa, it must be difficult to memorize them all, right?"

"It's not so hard after we get used to them."

My answer made Kuon-sensei shrugged her shoulders. Well, from the perspective of someone from a world where they only use one kind of letters, it must seem impossible to be able to write hiragana, katakana, kanji, alphabets, and various letters mixed up all at once. When I think about it, English countries only uses alphabets, eh.

This world's letter is somewhat romaji-ish, and when I'm accustomed to it, it will be easier to read. Or rather, I can already read it.

This is the language that I should have memorized during the time I was small, but please understand that I was transported to the other world afterwards, and I was transported to the other world when I was only one month old. Of course I do not speak the language, and I'm supposed to be unable to read any

letter, too.

...Jii-san¹, as I thought, did you do something²? Well, it's acceptable since it's not something inconvenient.

While observing the condition during my lessons, Oriza-san brought us some tea. Today's tea has some flower petals in it, it really gives off the vibe of spring, and it's cute. Whether it's due to its scent or its warmth, it makes you feel at ease.

Then, after serving the tea, Oriza-san said.

"Ah, hey, hey, Seiren-sama. That reminds me, soon it'll be the week of "Spring's Banquet"!"

The week of Spring's Banquet.

As I have explained before, there are four remaining weeks that are included each in the 3rd month, 6th month, 9th month, and 12th month. They are the week of Spring's Banquet, the week of Summer Purification, the week of Autumn's Feast, and the week of the end of the year. Although it might be slightly out of date, in the calendar of the other world, it probably corresponds with the spring equinox, summer solstice, fall equinox, and winter solstice, if I am not wrong.

And during each of those special weeks, a festival matching each season is being routinely held. In spring and autumn, we hold a harvest festival, in summer we hold Obon³. The timing is different, but it seems that the meaning is quite similar to the one that is held in the other world. In winter, as the name suggests, marks the end of the year.

"Even in the village, there are festivals?"

"Yes, there are festivals. I can somehow understand about the harvest festival in autumn, but... in spring, do we harvest berries or stuffs like that?"

"That's right. Besides, it is the season where flowers bloom, so we also hold a celebration for that, I guess?"

Whoa-, I see.

Which means the celebration is equivalent to the other world's so-called

Hinamatsuri⁴ and Hanami⁵. During the Hinamatsuri, since there were girls in the facility, so we celebrated it. Since there was a cherry blossoms tree (Sakura) in a park nearby the facility, everyone made bento and brought it along to do Hanami together.

“Which means, during the festival, there will be various flowers blooming and it would look flashy?”

“That’s right. There are rare flowers that you can’t normally see, and there are also decorated places.”

“Really?”

The festival of flowers, eh.

There will be a lot more blooming flowers than the ones present in the Shiiya’s flower garden, also there will be lots of people, so surely it will be fun.

“I would like to come to the festival.”

The words reflexively escaped out of my mouth. But Oriza-san, who’s aware of my words, examines my facial expression. It’s not a worried face, but rather, it is an amusing expression. Not mine, but hers.

“Could Seiren-sama be interested in the festival?”

“Yes... Ah, but is it impossible for me to attend it?”

I do understand that I am in no position to act selfishly.

Even though I think that I’ll be having fun if I were to go to such a lively event.

But for my parents to send me out, I think they will somehow be greatly worried.

“Since I was told not to be separated from Alica-san even when I was only walking around the mansion⁶. And here I want to go outside the residence, I wonder what will become of it?”

“Ah. The master and madame are both worried about Seiren-sama, eh-“

Isn’t it obvious? After all, I’m their daughter who previously was missing.

Even when I returned, there’s no helping if they were to think that something

else might happen to me.

“In that case, why not try asking for your parents’ permission together with me? Perhaps if there was someone to accompany you, your parents would give their permission?”

“It might be worth it to try, but I shouldn’t expect a lot. Well, I kinda understand my parents’ feelings.”

While nodding to Kuon-sensei’s offer, I thought to myself that perhaps it would be useless, and gave up.

Because in the past, when everyone let their eyes off me for even an instant, I vanished from the mansion. Even if it’s in my own territory, it’s understandable to think about what to do if something were to happen to me should I go out of the mansion.

That’s why I concluded in my head that it would be enough if at least I could hear the stories from the maids who could go there.

Notes :

* Basically it’s the literal writing conversion of “this is a pen” in Japanese letters : hiragana.

¹ Referring to Mugen-jiisan

² I assume this refers to how Seiren is able to understand the language used here right after she’s transported back

³ [Obon](#) or just Bon is a Japanese Buddhist custom to honor the spirits of one’s ancestors.

⁴ [Hina Matsuri](#) (Doll Festival or Girls’ Festival) is usually held on March 3rd, when people pray for the happiness and healthy growth of girls.

⁵ [Hanami](#) (花見, “flower viewing”) is the Japanese traditional custom of enjoying the transient beauty of flowers; flowers (“hana”) are in this case almost always referring to those of the cherry (“sakura”) or, less frequently, plum (“ume”) trees.

⁶ The previous translator used the word “castle” but I decided to change it

into “mansion” in my translation since I feel like it fits the context well rather than castle.

Chapter 25: With Everyone, The Spring Harvest Festival

“Seiren. I heard from Kuon, but do you really want to go to the Spring Festival?”

My father asked me during the evening meal of the same day that I learned about the existence of The Spring Harvest Festival.

Kuon-sensei, you sure got your business done quickly.

“Ah... uhm, I thought that it looked fun when I heard about it... Uhm, if it's impossible for me to come, then it's okay.”

“I see... I understand your desire to go there, but I'm still worried because there will be so many people there.”

It is true that I really want to go, so I answered like that after drinking one share of the water. My mother's reaction, well, it was exactly as I expected. Father was also troubled by it, I understand it since it was shown all over his face.

Oh well. I really have said things that made them very troubled, eh.

“Tou-sama, Kaa-sama. I will also come there, so is it really not possible for Ane-sama to also come there?”

Then, a voice could be heard. Apparently, it was the sound of Saryuu's fork and knife, but you're not supposed to make a noise from using them. Not caring about the fact that it was a breach of etiquette over here, that little brother of mine cut into our conversation. He is pouting a bit, but it's not because the food is bad. In the first place, Shiiya's chef makes really delicious meals, and I'm grateful for that.

As far as the meal is concerned, come to think about it. Saryuu has been living here way longer than me.

“Saryuu, you have come to the festival before. How was it?”

“That's right. It was very lively with people, and it was really fun. There were a

lot of shops, and there were lots of pastries and food that you don't usually see in the house."

"T, there, Saryuu."

My father became flustered and raised his voice, since he probably thinks that I might want to go all the more after hearing that story.

Yeah, it sounds really fun, and Saryuu's expression when he talked was as if he had so much fun, and I also think that I really would like it if I can come, too.

But, they might think of their daughter that once disappeared and finally just returned, what if she didn't return after she went out.

Both father and mother would be terribly scared of it.

As I thought, it'd be okay if I were not to go. But before I could speak, my mother wiped her mouth with a napkin and turned to face father.

"It's obvious that we'll be worried, but Seiren will also get bored if she's only surrounded by the mansion's property. As long as she has someone to accompany her, isn't it fine if it's only for one day, dear?"

"Uh... Hmhm... But, well..."

Eh, mother also thinks that it's alright for me to go? Although she must also be very worried about me.

Upon seeing my father who's mumbling to himself, I begin to think.

Errrr, what am I supposed to say in response?

What if I were to say that it's alright to not go there, or what if I were to say that I really want to go? Towards me who's troubled, mother slightly sighed and folded her arms. And then she speaks out clearly.

"If you're that worried about your daughter, it should be alright to arrange security outside. Isn't that right?"

"... I, is that so. Well, as long as you bring along Alica and the others, it should be alright."

"Is it okay?"

Is it really alright?

Is it okay for me to go outside? As long as I'm together with Alica-san and the others. That is, well... if I'm alone then I won't know the way and it will certainly trouble me, so I think it would be nice if I'm together with someone.

Or rather, what is with that "arrange the security"? Well, I also think that it would be no good if there is no security at all since there'll be a lot of people, but I wonder if it's really alright to have it arranged mainly because of me?

"Yeah. But I think that you'll only be allowed to go outside for one day during the first day of the festival. Is that alright with you, Seiren?"

"T, thank you very much."

I bowed to say my thanks to my mother who's smiling in triumph. As the desserts were brought here, the conversation ended just like that.

And then, during the Week of Spring Banquet, the first day.

"Seiren-sama. You look really good in it."

"Ah. Somehow I feel more at ease like this."

"The heels of the shoes are lower than usual, so it should be easier to walk in them."

It's not the dress I usually wear, but I'm wearing a simple white blouse and bright green skirt, also the flat shoes are the best part of it. My hair was tied into two using pink ribbons.

Alica-san and Minoa-san, too, are not wearing their usual maid clothes, instead they are wearing simple clothes. Alica-san wears a light-blue colored, and knee-length one piece, while Minoa-san wears a salmon pink shirt with a long white skirt.

"Alica-san looks more like a lady than I do. Minoa-san also looks pretty in simple clothes."

"Is that so? I don't think I changed a lot compared to how I am normally, thank you."

"...Thank you for your compliments."

Alica-san is really being modest, but I think that the maid's clothing feels

somewhat more like a uniform. But today's one piece also has laces attached to its hem, it looks really cute.

Minoa-san tries to avert her eyes. It's obvious that she's shy from it. Or, how should I put it, when she looks like this, she feels like a cool onee-san. Although if she smiles a little more, she will look cute, but well, this is how Minoa-san is.

And, along with both of them, I go down towards the entrance hall. Over there, Yuzuruha-san, who's normally there, is not present. Instead...

"Seiren-neesama. Today, me and this Kanna will accompany you."

"I'm Kanna. It's nice to meet you."

In front of me, there's Saryuu who's wearing a light jacket along with suspender-styled¹ pants, and a boyish maid-san wearing a lemon yellow shirt with a matching lattice mini skirt, the two of them are standing side by side. I see, so this person is Kanna-san?

"Eh, are you two coming with me as well?"

"That's right. Tou-sama told me to go together with you since he is so worried over Neesama. I also got pocket money to spend for the festival."

"This is Seiren-sama's share. There's around 5000 ieno. Here you go."

"Ah, u, uhm, thank you."

The wallet that Kanna-san handed down to me was the so-called coin purse (purse with a metal clasp). Well obviously the pouch doesn't have any zipper to it.

Looking inside, there are various kinds of coins. I know the variety because Kuon-sensei taught me about them when I told her that I could go to the festival. What's inside are 50 ieno, 100 ieno, 500 ieno, each of them is a blue copper coin. Judging by the color, it seems to be the same kind of metal used to make a 10 yen coin.

But, even if they are 50, 100, and 500 ieno coins, the total of them mixed altogether is 5000 ieno. In other words, it's kind of heavy. Well, it seems that the paper money is distributed only in the standard metropolitan city, so it cannot be helped.

“I wonder if I should return the unused money later on?”

“Tou-sama won’t do something as stingy as that. Well then, let’s go, Neesama, and everyone too.”

Geh. I put on a bitter smile to Saryuu who’s pulling my arm. Besides, this kid, he’s only using me as an excuse to have fun himself, isn’t he? Well, it doesn’t matter, though.

It was my first time going outside, and I was welcomed by the liveliness. It might be due to the fact that it’s the time for festival, and what’s more, it’s the first day of it. There are various kinds of stores opening on both sides of the road and there are also a lot of people from the village who are selling and buying lots of things.

The Cheria trees that look like the Sakura trees that I know are lined up together, forming tree-lined avenues. Perhaps it is the main road since the width is quite spacious. The road is decorated with lots of Cheria flowers that have more reddish colored pink than Sakura flowers.

Flowers of other colors are decorating the shopfronts. Be it the burning red flowers, dazzling yellow flowers, and snow white flowers.

I don’t know why, but somehow I can only think of it as amazing.

“Seiren-sama, please calm down. You look like a country bumpkin.”

“Eh, ah, sorry. But that’s not wrong, too, I guess.”

“Since this is Neesama’s first festival experience, after all.”

It’s kinda fun to walk in one group with people while saying “kyaa, kyaa” out of excitement. I came to understand the feeling of a girl who’s walking down the streets along with her friends just like this.

“Waai, Onee-san, what about trying a honey candy?”

In front of me who’s looking around restlessly as I am fascinated by the surroundings, a candy that looks like the apple candy (Ringoame) is suddenly being presented. Eh, after reflexively receiving it, I turn to face the person who’s giving me the candy. I think that somehow I recognize that voice.

“Oriza-san?!”

“Thank you for your patronage. It’s 100 ieno.”

Oriza-san who’s wearing a bandana and a smaller apron than usual, smiled friendly and held out her hand. Ah, so it’s not free?

“Ah, that surprised me. Uhm, 100 ieno? Here you go.”

“Thank you for your continued patronage. Hmm, please enjoy the candy!”

Receiving the money, Oriza-san thanked me in a playful way, then walked away briskly. Ah, on the other side, there’s shop that’s selling candies.

“...Did she run a store?”

“No way. That must be a part of the security, right?”

I asked Saryuu who seems exasperated, but that doesn’t seem like a sneaky investigator, right? I mean, look at that.

...but when I think about it, there’s a possibility. Because somehow, all around the stores, I see some people who look like the maid-san and also the servants.

Also, I think there’s a dubious-looking amulet store. The owner has a long beard tied with a somewhat cute ribbon, wearing a hood with a huge star pattern.

“Hohoho, spring is the season of happiness, how about an amulet dyed with a berry color that invites happiness, young miss?”

“...Could you possibly be Jigen-san?”

Yes, it’s certainly the first voice that I heard after I returned to this world, so of course I’d remember it so well.

“What are you talking about? I’m just someone who sells amulets, who just happened to pass by. Now now, please have one.”

“...T, thank you... very much...”

“Thank you for your continued patronage. One is priced 350 ieno.”

“Ah, that’s right.”

So, it’s also charged for money. Ah well, isn’t it obvious.

The amulet I received in exchange was sized around a 500 yen coin... well, the

size was roughly the same as the 500 ieno we used here, around that small size. It was a purple purse. Perhaps, there is a stone or something else inside of it.

Dyed in a berry color, could it be the fruit that resembled a purple strawberry that I ate before? If it's an amulet of spring, then it really is perfect. But, is this also part of the security?

“Ah, Jigen-sama runs a store every year by himself. That amulet is quite popular for its overwhelming effectiveness, or so people say.”

I fell down² hearing Minoa-san's brief comment. Isn't that diligent of him?³

Notes:

¹ In case you didn't know (since I didn't even know about this term before (・・。)ゞ), suspenders are fabric or leather straps worn over the shoulders to hold up trousers. If you watched the old Pokemon series, it looked like the red strap thing that Misty wore over her clothes. If nothing comes to your mind, it looks like [this](#).

² The way Seiren reacted here was more like a [Face Fault](#).

³ Not sure about this one, the original Japanese is あれはガチだったんかい。

Chapter 26: The Delicious Spring Harvest Festival

When I was walking around the stores, there was the sound of ringing bells. Ah, so it's lunch time already.

The sound feels similar to the sound of the temple's bells ringing. In this world, the bells that are on the top of the clock tower will ring to notify people of the time. The voice isn't that loud, but even from inside the mansion, I can hear the voice as if it is being carried away by the wind. I heard it before and asked, "What sound was it?", that was the time I gained the knowledge of the bells.

The clock tower isn't that tall, it is around the height of a 3-staired building. Even so, that clock tower seems to be enough for the area around here. In this kind of a large town, the buildings seem a little bit apart from one another, and the renowned clockmaker said that he made the clock tower according to the impression he got from this town's landmark, making sure that the clock tower would be sufficient for this area¹.

Anyway, I decided to take a break and approached the square where the clock tower is located. The tower is situated in the middle of the square, and there is a bell on the top of the tower. Just directly below the bell, a large clockwork can be seen.

Surrounding the tower, there are wooden tables and benches lined up, it gives off the vibe of a café. I'm aware that this is lunch time, but it's still extremely crowded. When I wondered about it, Minoa-san told me the reason behind the crowd.

"There is a café over here which is run by the sweets shop. The Spring Festival limited cake that they serve is very delicious!!"

So, there is a sweets shop over here. ...which means, everyone might unexpectedly have some money to spare from their living expenses.

But still, the limited cake, eh? Even the usually unexpressive Minoa-san talked about it while grasping her fist and put on a strong emphasis on it, so it must be really tasty, I think. Both Alica-san and Kanna-san also nodded their head in

agreement simultaneously.

“Even I have eaten that cake last year. I highly recommend it for you, Neesama.”

Just when I thought it was just the girls recommending it to me, Saryuu suddenly added. He even gave his stamp of approval. Now now, I will be craving for it if you put it that way. I wonder if the customers around us all are aiming for that limited edition cake?

In some way or another, we finally found a table to sit on. After a while, the waiter came to pick up the order.

“Welcome. Feel free to state your order.”

“...Yu, Yuzuruha-san?!”

No way. My mind is blown up now.

Since he is being a waiter, his usual plain-looking butler style is no longer there. His white shirt is more tucked than the usual one, it has more folds, and there's a dark green colored ribbon tie. Above the black straight pants, there's a belt with the same color as his ribbon tie, or rather, it looks like an obi—anyhow, the cloth is rolled².

Now that I look at him again, Yuzuruha-san is actually a cool and refined Oji-san. If he were to welcome the customers with that kind of appearance on a daily basis, I wonder if the store will be prosperous.

When I'm still thoughtlessly fascinated, Saryuu called out to me.

“Ane-sama, which tea would you like to have?”

“Which one, well...”

I checked the menu in a hurry. The menu is served in the form of a white wooden board. The name and the price of the cuisines is written with paint. I don't know whether it is normally like this or if it's because of the event, but there isn't much variety.

Also, there is a picture of tea besides the writings, I wonder if this is the sample illustration? Since I cannot read anything besides the writing of “tea” and “cake”, I feel saved by the illustration.

“Err... what about this flowery type?”

“Alright, then Ane-sama will have the Flower Banquet Tea. I will also have the same order, please.”

As Saryuu made the order, I passed the menu to Alica-san, who’s sitting besides me. Saryuu sits across from me, and Kanna-san sits next to him. I’m sitting between Alica-san and Minoa-san, with Minoa-san sitting across from Kanna-san.

Ah, Minoa-san and Kanna-san received the menu from Saryuu. So, there’s no need to show it to them anymore.

“I’m going to have the Southern Tea. Minoa, Kanna, what will you order?”

“I will order the Flower Banquet Tea.”

“Ah, I’ll also order the Southern Tea-“

“Then, it will be 3 Flower Banquet Tea and 2 Southern Tea. To accompany it, what about ordering the Viola & Cheria cake?”

“Please do!”

As soon as the name of the cakes got mentioned, Minoa-san immediately raised her hand. I see, so that is the cake that she wanted to eat? When I shifted my attention to Saryuu, he is bowing his head and smiling in agreement. Hmm, then it should be good.

“Well then, we’d like to order Viola & Cheria cake for each of us.”

“Understood. Please wait for a while.”

After ordering the cakes, Yuzuruha-san bowed his head deeply and then quickly walked away. Ah, on the opposite side of the square, there is a big shop just around the corner. I see, so the orders will be brought from over there, eh.

Ah well, the one who watched over Yuzuruha-san wasn’t me alone. So, I’ll try asking the others.

“...Hey. Is Yuzuruha-san doing this kind of thing every year?”

“No, this is the first time I’ve ever seen him doing this. Hey, Minoa.”

“Eh? Eh, ah, yes, it’s also my first time seeing him like this. What about

Kanna?”

“Of course, it’s my first time seeing this too. He’s cool, isn’t he?”

“So Yuzuruha could attend to the customers like that...”

“Ah-, is this also the first time for you, Saryuu...”

Eeh, in other words, because I said that I wanted to go and see the festival, these kinds of things happened... Could it be? Or how should I put it... Is it alright to mobilize the maids and the servants for that reason?

“...Is it alright with everything in the mansion? I mean, with Yuzuruha-san gone...”

“There should be a minimum number of people remaining in the mansion. For the time being, I also haven’t seen Kuon-sensei around.”

“Most likely Kaya-san also stays in the mansion. So, it should be alright.”

Hearing Alica-san and Minoa-san’s answers, I thought that it would be somehow alright. Also, I have a hunch that the chef is also gone from the mansion.

“...Ah-. But still, looks like it’s my fault. Sorry.”

“It’s not Ane-sama’s fault. It’s just Tou-sama and Kaa-sama being too overprotective.”

“That’s right. Seiren-sama has not done anything bad-“

Haha. Saryuu, Kanna-san, thank you.

After having the conversation, the cakes and the tea arrived. While trying to put up a nonchalant expression, I paid the bill by giving the pocket money I received to Yuzuruha-san. Each person costed around 850 ieno, and as for Saryuu and Kanna-san’s share... “I have my own allowance and Kanna’s my attendant, so...” as Saryuu took out money from his wallet. Of course, I paid for Alica-san and Minoa-san’s share.

In addition, it seems like it’s natural over here to pay for our purchases when the items are delivered, something like a direct exchange. I assume it’s to prevent running away without paying for the orders.

The Flower Banquet Tea that I ordered is the type that has flower petals of different colors floating in the tea. While the Southern Tea that Alica-san and Kanna-san ordered is... eh, it looks like cinnamon tea? Their tea smells like it.

“Alica-san, what kind of tea is that?”

“As the name implies, it is an imported product from the warm region of the South. Normally, the price is quite expensive, so I can’t drink it that often. But during this kind of time, they are doing special services and make the price becomes cheaper, so I can drink it.”

“Hee... Ah, so the South region is quite warm?”

So the fact that the South region has warmer seasons doesn’t change much from the other world, I see. Whoa-, I’m quite grateful for not having to remember the common sense practised here from the very basic.

Well, anyway, let’s talk about the cakes. The sponge cake is dyed with pink cream, creating a pink and white pattern. Viola seems to be the name of the flower that makes the yellow and purple colored preserving sugar that’s covering the top of the cake. The pink color seems to be made out of Cheria fruit, so I can safely assume that Cheria is the same as Sakura.

The cream is held between the sponge, and it seems they also put purple berries in it. When I look at it, it’s just like a normal short cake. But, it looks pretty delicious.

“I’ve always been waiting for this day to come. Woww...”

“...Minoa-san, you’re exaggerating-.”

In front of the cakes, Minoa-san’s eyes are sparkling. Ah, I wonder if she’s fond of sweet things. I wonder if I should just buy some sweets for the souvenir that I will bring when I return home? I wonder if preserved sugar flower is alright?

Before thinking about the souvenir, let’s just eat what’s in front of my eyes. Itadakimasu (Let’s eat)!

“I give my thanks to the God of the Sun and also to the season. Itadakimasu (let’s eat).”

...that was, well, the prayer we should say before eating meals in this world. To put it simply, during the time we pray, the hot food will become cooler and the cold food will be warmer, so they will taste perfect; and so that the god won't be disheartened if we don't pray. It is admirable that we have god who's that interested in humans, but well, the reason he created the world must be due to his feeling of solitude from being all alone, right?³

Anyway, it's a cake that I have high expectations of.

"Whoa, it's really delicious!"

The sourness of the berry and the Cheria's sweetness create an exquisite match. The sponge cake feels a little insipid, but it's alright because it's combined with the flavor of the tea. Besides, the Viola preserving sugar is really sweet, it makes the taste really good.

My eating speed doesn't seem to be quite fast, while Alica-san and Minoa-san have already started eating with all of their hearts. Sometimes Minoa-san seems to be entranced by the food, but let's pretend that I don't notice it. Yup.

"Ane-sama. I'm going to put this into the tea and drink it."

Saryuu picks up a little Viola and "plop!" he drops it into the tea. Afterwards, it increases the color of the flowers in the tea, making it look more beautiful. That's why, I'll try to imitate him.

"Hm. Ah, it smells good and the sweetness spreads in my mouth!"

"Isn't it tasty?"

"Hmph—Saryuu-sama, that drinking method was originally mine, I taught you that—"

Next to Saryuu who looks happy, Kanna-san is pouting her cheeks. Hey, little brother of mine, I understand that you want to show off, but what should I do as your big sister, then?

After eating the cakes, we come back to the Cheria Avenue while snacking on the fried potatoes. In any case, it seems that there are some events afterwards, so the place's crowded with a lot of people. Both of my hands are being held by Alica-san and Saryuu, and so we walk around while forming a group.

“Just right after lunch time, there will be a parade where the flower car will move around the town. If you bring back the scattered flowers and make it into Hoshihana (干し花), it is said that you’ll be guaranteed to stay healthy for a year.”

“Heee...”

Alica-san really knows a lot, eh. I’m a bit impressed.

Hoshihana is the term used to call dried flowers. In whichever world is it, that kind of thing still exists, eh.

Ah well but now... when I turn to my left and my right, there are so many people around. Alica-san and Saryuu whose hands I’m supposed to be holding right now, and Kanna-san who’s supposed to be next to them, also the tall Minoa-san... I suddenly can’t catch a glimpse of them.

So, I wonder if it is by a coincidence that I can see that person passing by my eyes just now.

“...Director?!”

The one passing by me just now is unmistakably, the one who has raised me for the past 18 years, the orphanage director.

Notes :

¹ Not really sure about the details, but it’s the most I can make out of this sentence : 何でもちょっと離れたところの大きな街にこういうのが得意な時計職人さんがいて、目印みたいな感じで作ったんだとさ。

² Again, that’s my rough translation of this sentence: 黒のストレートパンツの上にはリボンタイと同じ色のベルトだか帯だか、ともかく布巻いててさ。

³ The most I can make out of these two sentences: 簡単なのは、祈ってる間に温かいものが冷めたり冷たいものが温まったりして美味しくなくなったら神様もしよげるだろ、という理由から。えらく人間味のある神様だけど、まあひとりぼっちが寂しくて世界作っちゃったんだもんなあ。

Chapter 27: The Dangerous Spring Harvest Festival

At that time, it never occurred to my mind that there might be something wrong.

“P, please wait, Director!”

“Seiren-sama?!”

“Ane-sama?”

It’s just, naturally, all I can think of is to run after him, running in the opposite direction of the flowing crowd. I desperately run after his familiar back.

“Director!”

There’s no way I’d mistake his familiar back that is coming into and out of my sight.

The one who had always been by my side for 18 years of my life where I became “Shikino Seiren”, the director of the orphanage that picked me up.

I chased and chased after him. And by the time I noticed it, that familiar back is nowhere to be seen anymore.

“...Eh?”

I stopped right beneath a Cheria tree. A reddish pink petal is being carried away by the wind, and then it falls down to the ground. There are still a lot of people, but the more I get closer to this place, the number of people is getting scarcer.

“Director?”

I tried looking around my surroundings, but Director is nowhere to be seen. Even though I could find him in the middle of the crowd just now, why couldn’t I find him in this place where there are fewer people?

Although, it’s no wonder.

After all, Director isn’t supposed to be here in the first place.

This world is different from the world where the Director raised me.

But, there's no way I can mistake him for someone else.

"...E, eh?"

Suddenly, I come back to my senses. Both of my hands are totally free now. Although Alica-san and Saryuu were supposed to be holding them.

Not only the Director, but Alica-san, Minoa-san, Saryuu, and Kanna-san are no longer here around me.

I haven't noticed until now that our hands were separated.

It's not good. Am I lost?

"Seiren-sama!"

"Hyaa?!"

My shoulder got abruptly touched by someone's hand, and I jumped back in response and turned back. In front of my eyes, there's Alica-san who's panting.

"It's me, Seiren-sama. Please withdraw your fighting pose."

"Ah, Alica-san."

Uuu, in my surprise, my body moved on its own and I braced myself to my fighting pose. Moreover, I'm withdrawing it, so please don't cry.

Ah well, but getting into a fight would mostly make me cry, too.

...but, that isn't the case right now. Alica-san came chasing after me who suddenly disappeared in the crowd. So, look, it must mean that... she's really upset, she's about to cry. It's obvious.

"It won't do any good if you were to be separated from us. For what do you think we came here together?"

"S... Sorry... Uhm..."

That's right. If I were to disappear again, or if something were to happen to me, it would make my parents sad. That's why they had everyone to accompany me, and there are the maids and servants here and there around the street.

If I were to disappear due to my personal reason, their efforts would have

gone futile.

I tried to tell her the reason why I became separated from everyone else, although it seems to be useless.

“Since there was someone who looks a lot like the person I know, so I ran after him.”

“Seiren-sama’s acquaintance?”

“Yup. Although he isn’t supposed to be here in the first place... but I still can’t control myself after that.”

Alica-san and the others know that I returned from a very faraway place. I think they know around that much. That’s why, they might understand that it’s quite impossible for me to encounter my acquaintance in this street.

But, the only people I know around this street are none other than the people in the Shiiya mansion. Besides them, I don’t know anyone else, that’s why I chased after someone that’s familiar to me in the middle of the crowd... Aaah, it’s no good.

It’s not a perfect excuse at all.

“Haa... it’s good that I could find you, but don’t make us worried again. Please.”

“Okay. I’m sorry.”

As if to perfectly leaving behind the jumbled circumstances surrounding my disappearance, Alica-san decided to finish the conversation at this point. Anyhow, the fact still remains that it’s my fault, so I bow my head to apologize.

Incidentally, as I joined my hand again with her, I smelled something incompatible with the smell of the flowers around. Ah-, it is clearly the smell of alcohol, yes. When I turned my eyes tediously towards the source of the smell, I saw some delinquent Onii-chan who were wearing untidy kimono with, how should I put it... a *very* bad sense of color combination, grinning towards us. Ah, there are around 3 to 4 Onii-chan, eh.

“What are ye doing here? Ehh, you two young ladies?”

“If you’re free, let’s drink tea together, okay? Or is sake okay?”

“Ah, you’d prefer looking for flowers than sake, right? Ahaha!”

Aaargh.

So it’s a common thing to have these kind of drunk delinquents around at places like this, even in this world, huh? Wait, there were shops that sold sake here?! Since I’m still not yet at the legal age to drink (or at least based on the other world’s standard), I didn’t notice it. Nah, besides, the mansion was abundant with water, and there didn’t seem to be any alcohol¹.

“Seiren-sama, please get behind me.”

Alica-san stepped forward to cover me. Errr, in this situation, it’s better for me to be quiet... right? In the first place, I have never practiced any form of martial arts at all, and I’m weak at fighting. But, Alica-san who’s protecting me is a female. If she can handle those delinquents, wouldn’t it be considered lucky²?

This is bad. If only someone could come and help, that’d be great. But, the people around here seem to be immersed in walking through the road, they don’t even notice us. I can also raise my voice, but that can cause a panic, and since there are lots of people around, that’d be dangerous.

Eh, it’s getting more crowded than before. I wonder if the parade that we talked about before would be coming out soon?

“Come on, don’t be afraid. Oh, that’s right, that’s right! Soon, the parade will be coming out, so why don’t we collect the flower petals together?”

“And then, why don’t we make Hoshihana and get along together? We can take it slowly, too.”

“Let see, no need to be so reserved, alright?”

“That is unnecessary.”

Ugh, I have a bad feeling about this. Don’t sidle up to us! Both me and Alica-san are now being cornered.

This is bad. I thought I could push them away while showing off my cool or badass side. But I forgot about the changes in my body.

Ah forget it, it’s not something that I can explain well. Because this is

something that you have to personally experience to understand.

Suddenly, someone grabbed my empty hand from behind. As I am being pulled forcefully like that, Alica-san who is holding my other hand also notices it and turns around.

“Seiren-sama!”

“Hwa! Hey, let me go!”

“Let me go, she said! How cute~!”

Damn it, they got me from behind.

I tried shaking and waving around my hand in a panic, but it's no use. My hand wasn't allowed to be free at all. Or rather, his grasp on my wrist is tightening, it hurts. This bastard, why won't he let me go?!

...Although, it's obvious.

I'm a woman right now. My body is smaller than when I was a male, so naturally, my power is getting weaker, as well.

I didn't win any fight when I was a male, and now I'm only getting weaker, it's worse.

“There, there, soon they'll scatter the flowers around. Let's just go together, okay, Nee-chan?”

“Let go of the hand, you insolent!”

“Insolent-?!”

W, what is it?

Somehow, it's scary.

I don't really know what exactly is scary, but I'm shivering as I get goosebumps.

Scary.

My head is getting blank.

Someone.

Director.

“Before going to the flower scattering, how about eating some honey candies~?”

Along with a bright voice unsuitable to the situation, my seized hand was released.

More precisely, the man that was grasping my hand got knocked right overhead and fell down to the ground.

“Ah, the candies would be wasted on the likes of you!”

In the next moment, Alica-san raised her leg overhead. Ah, the toes directly hit the crotch of the man who was right in front of Alica-san. While her opponent was caught in voicing his pain, she did a somersault. Without even pausing, Alica-san continued to wave around her long legs, launching her kicks towards the other men’s shoulders.

...How strong.

“Seiren-samaa, are you alright?”

“Oriza, san...”

Just right in front of me, there is Oriza-san who pouted her cheeks while perfectly trampling over the man who just fell down on the ground.

She then scowled. Now, now, she’s totally angry.

Aaah, I’m really not good.

Even though I was told not to be separated, I selfishly moved around by myself instead, and got into trouble.

I understand that I’m good-for-nothing.

“Really, *sigh*. If Saryuu-sama didn’t rush off to find you, it could have become a serious problem, you know?”

“Eh, Saryuu did?”

“Neesama!”

“Seiren-sama!”

“Aah, thank goodness, you’re safe-“

“I’m alright. There’s no need to call the guard.”

“Fwohoho. It was a dangerous situation, wasn’t it?”

“Jigen-san?”

When I turned my glance towards the direction where Oriza-san pointed, Kanna-san and Minoa-san was running with Saryuu in the lead. And, behind them, an Ojii-san wearing a loose cloth with the star mark on it, followed with his unsteady steps. That alone is noisy enough, so I think it’s really amazing on how people who were immersed with the parade didn’t even notice it. Ah, I shouldn’t escape from the reality.

“We asked Jigen-sensei’s help to find Seiren-sama’s whereabouts-“

“The one who returned Seiren-sama who was separated in a faraway place was me, after all. I still remembered the magical power that remained in Seiren-sama’s body at that time.”

As to why Jigen-san appeared, Oriza-san did a good job in explaining it straightforwardly. As for Jigen-san’s explanation... Ah, uhm... I don’t really understand it, but, in short, he managed to find me using something like a magic radar, I think.

Jigen-san took a long sigh, and then extended his hand. His hand would then drop, only to stroke my head gently.

“I don’t really understand the situation, but you can encounter those kinds of people especially when you walk alone. You must be more careful.”

“Yes, I’m sorry. As to not trouble everyone, I’ll be more careful.”

“Neesama, I’m glad you’re safe.”

Squeeze, Saryuu hugged me. Ah-, somehow, I feel relieved. But, still...

I have troubled everyone, eh. With just a little of my selfishness.

...I feel really depressed.

With this, I think I should behave myself for quite a while in the mansion.

Notes :

This chapter’s notes only contain sentences I’m not really sure of, here they

are:

¹ いや、それなりに水が豊富なせいか屋敷でも出なかったし

² チンピラにしたらラッキー、てなもんじゃないんだろうか。

Chapter 28: Being Tired and in A Bad Shape

After returning to the mansion, all the details were reported to my parents. ... I think it was as a matter of course.

And because of that, my mother cried and I was reprimanded by my father. I thought that they'd be angrier, but it seems that for both of my parents, the most important thing is that I managed to return safely.

"Ooh, Seiren... At the very least, I'm glad you're safe..."

My mother hugged me in the same way as when I first returned to this mansion. I understand that my body also trembles a little, and I think that I really did something bad this time.

My father who is besides my mother who finally let go of me after heaving a sigh, folded his arms with a serious face. That can't be helped. I'm old enough to understand my current situation.

"That's true. However, Seiren, it was careless of you to be apart from Alica and the others. Since it was your first time going outside, you should've paid more attention and be more careful."

"...Yes. I'm sorry."

No matter what I say, I can only apologize for now. After all, it's my fault. Having no excuse left, those are the only words that I can say.

"Though I'm glad that you're safe, but I think it'd be better if you can postpone any plan to go outside for the time being. Can you stand it?"

"Yes. It's okay for me."

Being told that by my father, I nodded. Yeah, it'd be scary if the same thing were to happen again when I go outside.

Today, I was saved since Alica-san and Oriza-san came running after me. But, I won't have any way to know what will happen if there's a next time.

It never crossed my mind before that it'd be scary to have my hands caught by some men and that I couldn't run away from them.

While thinking about that, my father unfolded his arms. Upon looking up to his face, he has a troubled expression, but he's laughing.

"All right. Well then, just take a good rest for today. I'm sure you're tired, so should you need to eat any food, you can bring it to your room."

"Understood. After eating a bit, I'll go to sleep. Good night."

"Take a very good rest, Seiren."

Towards my father who pushed himself to laugh and treated me kindly, I bowed my head. After bowing to my mother, too, I leave the room... or my mother's room, to be exact.

"Seiren-sama, all you alright?"

"Ah, yeah. But really, please just bring me a little bit food. Sorry."

"No problem. I will bring your food, so please wait a little bit and clean your body for the time being."

Alica-san and Minoa-san both come along with me. And as always, they leave no time wasted and help me to take change my clothes.

Ah-, I don't understand why, but I feel down. If only my stomach doesn't growl for a little bit, I'd just want to crawl into the bed just like this.

"Neesama!"

"Seiren-sama-!"

"Saryuu, Kanna-san, too."

By the time I went down from the stairs, Saryuu and Kanna-san rushed off towards me. Both of them already returned to their usual young master style and maid style.

"Uhm, what did Tou-sama and Kaa-sama...?"

"Aah, Kaa-san cried."

I can't really hide them, so I decided to answer my little brother's question honestly. Nah, if they were to have dinner together after this, it'd be found out immediately, anyway, since my mother's eyes would be swollen.

Towards Saryuu who's at loss of words, I gave another reply.

"As for Tou-san, he told me not to go outside for a while. Well, that's natural, though."

"...but, Neesama is..."

"Because I broke my promise and wandered off alone, so it's what I deserved. There's no need for you to get dispirited. Everyone, too."

I clearly said that towards Saryuu who seems down, and also towards the three maids surrounding us as they were observing.

This is my own fault, so there's no need for the others to feel sorry about it.

"It seems that it's alright if I just walk around the grounds within the mansion, and I intend to be docile for a while."

"...Is that so?"

"As for today, I'll be having my dinner inside my own room. Sorry for not being able to eat together with you."

"...All right."

That's why, why are you feeling down, Saryuu? You have been able to properly asked for Oriza-san and Jigen-san's help, right? Thanks to that, I can be here right now in a complete piece.

After that, I ate a little bit of rice and then fell asleep immediately.

And the next morning.

Somehow, without a reason, my whole body feels so heavy.

It's not that I'm hurting anywhere, but I feel completely sluggish, and I cannot wake up.

"Seiren-samaa, good morning...?"

While examining my expression, Oriza-san tilts her head. Alica-san opened the louver door and said something while facing the grounds underneath the window, perhaps she greeted Saryuu who is currently in there.

"Aah, uhm, good mor... somehow, I feel sluggish."

“Eeh?”

After honestly explaining my condition, Oriza-san said, “Please excuse me,” and then placed her hand on my forehead. Her hand that touched me is quite bulky, but I think that her hand is pretty.

When that hand left my forehead, I thought that it was quite lonely. I wonder if it’s because I’m not feeling well?

“It doesn’t look like you have a fever, I think.”

“Ah, yeah, sorry.”

“No, no. You might be too tired after going outside. Let me call Jigen-san-“

After lightly turning her neck and saying that, Oriza-san rushed out of the room.

...Uhm, why Jigen-san?

“Are you alright?” Alica-san approached my bed, perhaps she heard my conversation with Oriza-san.

“Ah, Jigen-sensei has a magic tool that can do an easy medical examination.”

“Magic tool? ...Ah, okay, somehow I got it.”

To put it simply, there are tools imbued with magical power. Then, Jigen-san will be able to examine me using that.

“How should I put it... isn’t there any doctor here?”

“There is, but we’ll be able to get a more accurate medical treatment after receiving the diagnosis from Jigen-sensei’s examination..”

“...Is that so?”

So there is a division of labor between the doctors and the magicians. Well, the technology here isn’t well-advanced, so in exchange for medical equipment, in some way or another, there exists magic. Perhaps, that’s what I concluded.

While I wrapped my mind vacantly to think about that, Oriza-san has returned. But, it wasn’t Jigen-san who came alongside her.

“Good morning. Seiren-sama, how are you feeling?”

“Kuon-sensei?”

“Oh my, it isn’t Jigen-sensei?”

“My grandfather said that it’d be better for me to go instead of him.”

Kuon-sensei replied with a mysterious-looking expression on her face towards Alica-san who asked with a hand on her cheek.

What’s going on?

“Well, anyway. Please excuse me for a while.”

Kuon-sensei casually takes off the light bedcover, and puts something somehow similar to a stone slab on top of me who’s currently laying down on the bed. After it slides crosswise several times, she proceeds to check the surface of it.

That board, could it be something like an X-ray, CT-scan, or MRI? As I thought, the magic tools serve as the replacement for the medical equipment. Well, if you can understand the condition inside of the body, then it’d be wise to check it first.

So, after viewing the board several times, Kuon-sensei nodded once and turned towards the maids.

“Oriza-san, Alica-san.”

“Yes?”

“I think it’s [The Circulation] (Meguri no mono, 巡りの物). Perhaps since it’s Seiren-sama’s first time, her physical condition also worsened.”

Towards Kuon-sensei who declared it, the maids widened their eyes and went, “Eh?.” Oy, what the heck is going on?

“Is this her first time?”

“Oh dear.”

“Her circumstances also changed dramatically, so perhaps it added to her condition. Please prepare everything for her so she can have a good rest.”

“Understood-!”

“Understood. I’ll prepare it quickly.”

The two flustered girls rushed to the drawer. They opened the drawer and are now searching for something. So... what’s happening to me?

“...So what is it... [The Circulation]...?”

“That’s right. Uuuhm, I don’t know how you usually call it in the terms that you’re familiar with, but, uhm, it’s... how blood comes out from your shimo...

[しも] (meaning : bottom part... you know what she means.)

”

Hold on.

Shimo (written in katakana [シモ])... you mean, shimo

(written in hiragana [しも], indicating that she’s starting to understand what it means)

? You mean, my lower part?

Having blood coming out from there... that means...

Ah-, could it be?

“In the terms that I’m familiar with, it’s called menstruation, I think. Basically, there’s something preparing for pregnancy, but when they’re not needed, they will come out in the form of bleeding, right?”

“Yeah, that’s it. I’m glad-, you have the knowledge about it.”

Ding ding! I’m correct.

I see.

I have received lessons about it during middle school, so that’s it.

So that is right. I’m, right now... a girl, right.

...eh.

“...so I also have it?”

“That is, of course! You’re a woman around the sufficient age for it.”

Kuon-sensei said with an exasperated look. Ah, well, is that so?

But, is it really because of that I feel so sluggish and depressed?

“It’s the common symptoms, so it’s alright. There might be differences in symptoms per individual, but it looks like for Seiren-sama’s case, you’d have the tendency to feel down about it, eh.”

“Is that so?”

“Some people might get hot-tempered, too. Take me as an example.”

...It’s not that I haven’t heard much about the symptoms from other people, but now I begin to think that from now on, it will be what I’ll experience first-hand with this body of mine. I should listen well to what they say about it.

...so sluggish—.

“Also, your world changed alongside with your body, too. Therefore, Seiren-sama’s body might be surprised at the sudden changes.”

“My body, is surprised...?”

“So, I think that you’ll get used to it eventually. Once you do, it will be much easier to deal with.”

“...I wish I’d grow accustomed to it really soon.”

Uwaa-. Eventually is... how many months later, I wonder?

Ah well, about the preparations. Sanitary pads, and slightly darker colored underwear and pajamas. Ah-, so that it will not be noticeable even when it gets dirty, eh? Since it looks like it hasn’t started yet for me, I was told to be careful.

Also, there is something like a porcelain container. Its diameter is about the same as melon’s, and it has a flat disk-shaped lid wrapped around some kind of a pouch.

...hm, it’s a hot-water bottle. So, there is something like this, huh.

“In case if your stomach aches, it’d be easier for you to just pour in hot water inside this hot water container [Japanese : yu utsuwa; 湯器(ゆうつわ)], and let it warm up a bit.”

Apart from the term used, it seems like the way to use it is the same. I don’t really know about its effectivity and practicality, but since I was told so, perhaps

it's true.

"Yeah, thank you very much."

"Don't mention it. From here on, I think the pain will be more intense, so please take a good rest, Seiren-sama."

"...Alright."

Kuon-sensei's smiling face overlapped with my mother's worried face.

Ah-, I'm really bothersome, eh.

"Well then, I'll leave the rest to you. I'll be reporting the condition to the Madame."

"Understood. Kuon-sensei, thank you very much."

I can hear Alica-san's voice, somehow it seems quite faraway.

...Ah-, somehow, I'm so sleepy.

I wonder how many days will I have to endure this?

A female is really amazing, eh...

Chapter 29: Gradually, My Health Recovers

At the end of the day.

Beginning around the afternoon of the day where I first stayed in the bed, from then on, I became a bedridden person along with my stomach ache for around 4 days. Stomach, or should I say, around the insides of the area between my legs, that place gave me a tingling sensation and a dull pain. I've had enough, would I be experiencing it for every month? It's hard, you see.

Also, regarding the hot-water bottle... or in this world's term, the hot water container has such a tremendous power. After pouring hot water into it, I wrap it in with a slightly thick cloth and placed it on my stomach. After a short time, the warmth spread gradually. Because of that, somehow I felt more comfortable. Nah, really, the ancestor's wisdom is incredible!

Thanks to the hot water container, I somehow managed to eat my meals. I received foods that are made tender and easy to eat, the ones made using ingredients similar to [stew](#) or [pot-au-feu](#), and I got to eat them on my bed with ease. I felt relieved that my foods were warm.

Ah, I also properly went to the toilet. After putting on the gown, I asked someone from the maids to accompany me. Then, once I was done wiping, I was like, "Whoa!". The same thing happened whenever I needed to exchange my napkin.

The toilet paper used in this world is more like cotton or scraps of fiber gathered, it looks like a paper but it is soft and thin. It seems that in order to increase the volume of the material and to reinforce it, they also mixed the textile made of the plants that were usually used for making papers, but I think I feel guilty from using several sheets¹.

"It's a get-well gift from Saryuu-sama. It looks like a souvenir from the spring festival."

On the second day, or if I name it, the next day after my bed rest day, Minoa-san brought me a small glass bottle. The content is... aah, it's the Viola preserved sugar. The one that was on top of the cake and that Saryuu placed

into his tea.

Did he realize that I took an interest in it? What a good little brother he is, indeed.

“I have received a message from him saying that when you get better, please drink a tea with this. I also have told him ‘thank you’ in Seiren-sama’s place.”

“Yeah, thanks. That tea was totally delicious... Would it also be delicious even when I drink it just like a normal tea?”

“Sometimes there are the types of tea that you drink after putting in the preserved sugar, so it’s alright.”

I feel relieved by Minoa-san’s words.

I know that preserving salt is used in preserved foods, but it looks like the same case for the preserved sugar. It can be kept for quite a long time, and it has to be placed in a cool place like in the shade. Once I am feeling well, I’ll call Saryuu and ask him to drink the tea together with me. As brother and sister, would it not be strange?

On the day where it seemed like my circulation ended, I entered the bath after a while. Although my body was wiped properly every day, it still got dirty in the end, as one would expect.

During the time I left my bed, it seemed like the sheets and the pillows were completely replaced. Minoa-san said strongly to me, “Leave it to me. So that Seiren-sama can have a very pleasant rest, I shall tidy them up,” but could it be that she was boasting her capability?

“Since we’re not watching, please wash your body thoroughly, okay?”

Before soaking myself in the bathtub, Oriza-san and Alica-san put up cloth on my surroundings while saying that. ...Nah well, that saved me, thank you.

Anyway, as for washing my private parts... It has to be done with no exception at all even during the time I was sick and in a bed rest, there was a tub where I could thoroughly wash it myself. This situation is normal, but I feel bad for having to rub it. Also, it reeks the smell of iron².

Also also, I felt somewhat a strange sensation for having to scrub that place

by all means, but that is well, nah...

Please don't say anything, it's quite embarrassing since I'm talking about my own body that I will have to compromise with for my whole life.

So, feeling refreshed after having my whole body thoroughly washed, I'll be having a meal together with my family for the first time in a while. Wearing a deep green dress with a short-coated jacket that looks like a [white bolero](#), I timidly entered the dining room.

"Neesama!"

"Seiren. Are you feeling alright now?"

Saryuu looks happy, while my mother's voice indicates that she's worried. I somehow laughed and said, "I'm sorry for making you worried," while bowing my head. As for my father... he folds his arms on his own seat and keeps silent. My mother squinted her eyes in an instant, and then called him out with a slightly angry tone.

"...Dear."

"...Unh. Se, Seiren, that, is your body, alright, now?"

"Yes. It's all thanks to everyone."

Errr, Tou-san, I was thinking as to why you were slightly mumbling, but as I thought, it must be awkward to bring yourself to ask about the female's body, right? Well, this is indeed a complicated situation. The situation between a maturing daughter and her father, I mean.

"I, is that so. Then I'm glad. From now on, try not to force yourself too hard."

"Yes."

What he means by "don't force yourself too hard" is not just about my physical condition, I'm sure of it. Really, I need to be more careful, too.

I really shouldn't go outside too much, eh...

Then then, a few days later.

After my health was stable, in accordance to what I thought during my bedrest, I invited Saryuu to have a little tea party in my room. I also have some

shortbreads my mother gave me and the Viola preserved sugar that Saryuu brought for me.

Bringing along Kanna-san who also went to the spring festival together with us, my little brother entered my room with a slightly tense expression. Ah-, it must be because he's entering the room of someone of an opposite gender whose age is only slightly apart, so of course he'd feel nervous. I'm his older sister, although deep inside I'm supposed to be a brother, though.

"E, excuse me."

"Excuse me~!"

"Yeah, come inside. Saryuu, thank you for the festival's souvenir."

When I took the Viola preserved sugar from its storing place and showed it to him, Saryuu sternly straightened his back. O-i, it's not parents' day³ or an entrance examination, so there's no need to be that nervous-. ...Nah, it doesn't seem like this little brother of mine has ever experienced things like that, though.

"N, no problem! Since Kanna was the one who recommended it to me..."

"Eh, is that so?"

"Yeah. Seiren-sama, it's all because when you imitated Saryuu-sama dropping the preserved sugar into the tea and drink it, your face formed a really gentle expression!"

"A-h, haha, is that so. Thanks, Kanna-san."

Even so, I see... a boy around his age won't be too sensitive for things like that. When I was around his age, I was also quite insensitive. Yup, people said that people lacking self-consciousness usually turned insensitive, I think.

Well, anyway, Saryuu finally took a seat and proceeded to drink the tea that Oriza-san brewed after dropping in the preserved sugar. Kanna-san also enjoyed her tea and snack while happily saying, "Thank you so much, ya-y!". Although she was not in the same table as Saryuu and me, she was sitting somewhere else slightly apart from our table.

"Speaking of which, my biological father came during the time Ane-sama was

in a bedrest.”

After eating one shortbread, Saryuu suddenly mentioned it. Which reminds me, he came to this family as an adopted child to succeed this house after I went missing. That being the case, it won't be weird for his biological parents to come and meet him, I guess.

“Biological? Aah, I heard that you were our distant relative. So, he visited you?”

“Yeah. It has been quite a long time, but he visited me and strangely asked about Ane-sama. That's why, I'm a bit bothered by it.”

“About me?”

I spontaneously pointed myself and Saryuu nodded firmly. Why me, as I was about to think about that, I immediately realized about how I was known for.

“Well, of course he'd be curious. Even if they all said that I was recuperating, in truth, I was a daughter who went into somewhere nobody knew.”

“No, that is...”

When I answered like that, my little brother's expression strangely turned serious. I faltered and decided to drink one sip of the tea. After that, I noticed from his discerning eyes that it might be something quite grave.

“He said something like, ‘so she has come back from a really faraway place, hasn't she?’. His eyes were like gazing into the very distant place.”

“What?”

Finally returned, from a faraway place.

I'm supposed to be known as [the frail daughter who was recuperating] outside the mansion.

There was nothing wrong with the way he said that, but somehow the nuance of his sentence, doesn't feel like he indicated my recuperation.

“...Uhm. Did Saryuu's biological father... regarding my getting abducted...?”

When I asked, Saryuu shook his head. Flatly.

I'm really saved on the fact that the gestures used in this world are all the

same as the ones I know.

“He shouldn’t have known. I haven’t even heard anything about it until very recently, despite the fact that I have been spending some years in the Shiiya family.”

“...I thought he was referring to my returning home after recuperating, but the way he talked about that was quite peculiar...”

“Yeah.”

I wonder if the place I had been to was discovered?

The reason why we were hiding the fact that I was abducted and sent into a far, different world is because it won’t be weird for various problems to arise should anyone find out.

The ones who know about my being in the other world are only my parents, Jigen-san, and Kuon-san.

While the ones who know that I was abducted are only the people inside the Shiiya house, and also the servants.

But.

“...how should I put it... is it okay, Saryuu?”

Realizing something, I questioned my little brother.

To say such things, regarding how suspicious was his own biological father for the way he spoke.

“About what?”

“No, I mean, the one who said that was Saryuu’s biological father, right? For you, he must be a very precious parent.”

“Even so, my father right now is Shiiya Mondo. Also, my name is Shiiya Saryuu.”

“That is true, but still...”

I couldn’t think of any respond to Saryuu who answered decisively.

Since before coming here, I was also Shikino Seiren, so I can somehow

understand that feeling.

But, my parents right now are none other than Tou-san and Kaa-san.

“That is why, for me right now, he is just a distant uncle, Shikino Touya.”

“.....what?”

At that moment, I can't believe my own ears.

Just now, what did Saryuu say?

“Err, what did you, just say?”

“Eh?”

“Did you just say Shikino Touya?”

“Yeah. The direct distant relative of Shiiya family, the feudal lord of a remote region, the head of the Shikino family is Touya, my biological father.”

Saryuu reacted with a nod to me who was wide-eyed and was about to gnaw at the name he mentioned just now.

Shi-ki-no Tou-ya.

Shikino Touya.⁴

The same surname, the same personal name.

Saryuu's biological father and the orphanage director who raised me have the same name.

“...are you serious? Having exactly the same name...”

“Having exactly the same name?”

“The one who raised me was also called Shikino Touya.”

“What?”

This time, it was Saryuu's turn to be wide-eyed. That is a natural reaction.

Since someone who's supposedly in the faraway place that Saryuu doesn't know, to have the exactly same name as his own biological father.

“Coincidences really do exist, huh?”

“.....T, that’s right.”

I can only nod in response to Saryuu who said that in his blank amazement.

That day, the back that I found and chased after.

The director, could he be?

Notes:

¹ If anyone has a better suggestion for this line: 材料のかさ増しと補強のため
にって普通に紙に使われる草木の繊維も入ってるらしいんだけど、でも何枚も使っちゃ
うと申し訳ないと思う。

² Iron or metallic odor. It’s normal to have this kind of smell around that area
during menstruation because blood contains iron.

³ day when parents come to the school and observe their children during the
class

⁴ The first line was written with katakana, while the second line was written
with kanji. Katakana: シキノ・トーヤ。Kanji: 四季野冬也。

Chapter 30: Carefully, Feudal Lord Issues

On that evening, I couldn't sleep until late at night.

The [futon](#)¹ has become soft and fluffy thanks to it being replaced with a new one, and I turned over many times inside the fluffy futon.

“...Shikino, Touya.”

I muttered the familiar name. Just at that moment, I recall the smile that the orphanage director had when he stroked the back of my head during the graduation ceremony. I recalled the orphanage director, not my adopted brother's biological father, whom I had never seen before.

“...Director...”

I am thinking about what he might be doing around this time.

The moment I crossed over to this world, I felt that the director found me and was calling out my name. If that was not just my imagination, then that means I disappeared right in front of director's eyes.

Right in front of him, a person suddenly disappeared. He must be wondering what was going on.

At the very least, I want to go back once more as Shikino Seiren and bid my farewell.

“...I can't return there, can I?”

Since I was actually born here, to “return” there isn't the right choice of words. However, I was raised in that world for about 18 years, so I felt like it was better to say it as “returning” there rather than “going” there.

But, I was raised over there since I was swept away from this house. Then, while I was being raised as a man in the other world, my parents and Jigen-san were desperately looking for me for 18 years in this world, and once they found me, they brought me back.

Hmm, it's not completely my fault

(for saying that “returning there” is the right expression)

. After all, at least the ones who brought me up as a man were in that other world.

And this is not a joke.

Who on earth was the criminal who kidnapped me? It’s not like they will come out even if we yelled at them to come out.

Oh well, I rolled over in my bed once again, trying to stop my thinking. The bed cover was so fluffy, so even if I was restlessly moving around, I was quickly wrapped up again by the bed.

“Coincidence, is it?”

I recalled Saryuu’s words.

That his real father’s name is Shikino Touya, and that he went to see Saryuu during the spring festival.

By coincidence, the orphanage director who raised me was Shikino Touya, the person with the exact same name.

That back I spotted during the spring festival, even though I couldn’t see his face, at that time I thought that it was really the orphanage director.

By any chance, if that back’s owner is actually Saryuu’s biological father, then honestly he’d be someone who looks a lot like him, yet he’s a different person, or so I can say.

“...That’s right. Yup, different person.”

I tried to cover my face with the fluffy pillow. Oh, if others were to see me like this, I think I’d look like a girl being troubled by love or something like that, right? Uwaa, I don’t want to imagine anything!

Anyway, right.

At least, I think it’s better for me to think that it’s a coincidence for the director and Saryuu’s biological father to have the exact same name.

In the first place, this world’s naming sense is similar to the other world’s. Even if I had my name in kanji writing in that world, I was living by the same

name either way, “Seiren”.

That is why, let’s stop overthinking every single thing. No matter how many possibilities might arise, it’s still a different world, after all.

“Yup, let’s just sleep, sleep! It’s bad for your skin.”

...For me to have this kind of thinking, I wonder if it’s because I have returned to be a woman?

“Eeh, I have heard the story from Saryuu-sama. I wonder if there is some sort of connection to it?”

Somehow, even when I think that there’s nothing I can do for secretly thinking about it and feeling depressed about it, I decided to consult this to Kuon-sensei during my study time. Also, it seems Saryuu also discussed it in the morning.

“Is it alright for you to tell me what you have heard from Saryuu?”

“Yes, because I’ve received permission from the person himself. At that time, he allowed me to speak about what he said because Seiren-sama might want to discuss that matter with me.”

“Is that so...”

“In exchange, I may need to talk about what Seiren-sama told me when Saryuu-sama brings up this discussion again, is that alright?”

“Yes, please. If anything, it looks like it’s better for us to be sharing information.”

To affirm Kuon-sensei’s suggestion, I nodded in agreement.

For Saryuu, it’s a discussion related to the house in which he was born into. Considering that, my position to pry into this matter is inferior to him, however, personally, it’s something that I’m very concerned with.

“Well, it is certainly more natural to think that the same names are just coincidences. However, Touya-sama’s words are surely suspicious.”

“That’s right. On the other hand, as expected, I have to ask about this to my parents.”

“I think that’s a wise decision.”

If I ask my parents, perhaps we can also go and talk about it with the person himself afterwards. However, that might make things more complicated. Especially since I barely came back here.

“Nevertheless, I think for the moment being, it’s better for you to keep it inside your mind. The reason I said that is, most likely, there is a high possibility for Seiren-sama to be given a marriage proposal from the Shikino family.”

“What?”

Marriage proposal?

Aah, right. As long as Saryuu succeeds Shiiya’s house, I know that I must eventually become a bride and marry someone. Although I think that I should focus on spending my time for around 1 year in order to regain a little from the 18 years that I wasn’t able to spend together with my family.

Also, Saryuu’s house, eh. Now that I think about it, since Saryuu was sent out as an adopted child, then there should be another heir to succeed their family, over there.

“Saryuu-sama’s biological older brother will be the next feudal lord. However, he is still unmarried. If I remember correctly, this year, he will turn 28.”

“He is 10 years older than me?!”

“That is the way things are. Unfortunately.”

From the way she shrugged her shoulders, I get the feeling that it’s something that can’t be helped. I wonder is it really something that can’t be helped?

Still, I never have thought that our age would be this far.

Or rather, 28 years is twice of Saryuu’s age. So he has a big brother with that much age gap, huh.

While I was thinking about that, Kuon-sensei gave another example of age gap. Of people that I’m familiar with.

“Let me say this. This family’s husband and wife has 8 years age gap. I suppose... you didn’t know that, right?”

“...They have that much age gap?”

“Yeah. Unexpectedly, in the past Danna-sama seemed to have a baby face.”

In other words, my father looks younger than his actual age, so there was no need to worry about their age difference in the outward appearance. Nah, I thought their age gap was around 4-5 years, but it's 8 years, eh.

Or rather, just how old are my parents? They look considerably old... Ah, is that why? During the time I was gone, instead of making another child, they took in an adopted child. Since I was a daughter they got in their late age, they might think it was impossible to have another child.

“Besides, it seemed like Danna-sama couldn't decide on the marriage proposal easily. When he finally decided on Oku-sama, there was a rumor that his marriage was delayed because he was waiting for a good lady in the territory.”

“Ah, that's a good way to perceive it.”

To say it in a poor manner, you're way too selective, father. If we were to talk about a feudal lord's marriage candidates, I think there must be a lot of suitable candidates, so I wonder what was in father's consideration?

Truthfully, in comparison to Tou-san, Kaa-san has a lot more confidence. Really, I think she is reliable with the exception of her *oyabaka* part (doting parent).

How should I put it, was the Shiiya family doing well up to that time? Did Yuzuruha-san work hard? And was my father, as the person who would succeed my grandfather, working as hard as he could?

“...Well, I now understand more or less why Saryuu became an adopted child. As well as the reason why my abduction was being covered.”

I can say with confidence that it's an issue related to the territory. With the daughter who'd be the heir gone, there would be someone who'd step in to compete at the critical moment, surely. In our territory, there is a confectionery shop whose owner seems to be prosperous, and if he were to be the feudal lord, he would be completely exhilarated.

In order for that to not happen, they pretended that I was in the middle of recuperation, so I couldn't go to the public, and they also properly took Saryuu as their adopted child and appointed him as the heir.

Could it be that Tou-san was being overly particular about his marriage partner because he was considering problems related to the territory such as that? If that's the case, then I can understand.

"Well, that's right. Ever since the start of the experimental pepper cultivation, Shiiya territory's revenue has been increasing."

"In a sense, it's our special product, right? Even merchants have their eyes on it."

Riiight. These kinds of problems are so troublesome, really.

Even if Saryuu would succeed as the heir, wouldn't it be useless if you didn't prepare to solve these problems to a certain extent before that, Tou-san?

It's not a historical drama, but it would be very troublesome if there was a retainer who'd do something behind the lord's back and take an advantage of his position.

At the end of the day, we decided to observe the situation for a while. During that moment, I studied a lot of things, so that at the very least I would be able to follow my parents and Saryuu.

At the end of my study time, Kuon-sensei smiled at me.

"Starting from the next month, I think that the things I'm teaching you will be increased, with the exception of reading and writing, and etiquette. Please be prepared."

"Yes? Uhm, so what am I supposed to memorize?"

"Dance."

"...Whoa."

It appeared at last, the upper class' business!

...or, is it really what I think it means? I need to check it, check it!

"Is it as I thought it is? Making a pair with a man and then matching our steps

to the music, kind of thing, right?”

“Yeah. What do you mean by ‘As I thought’?”

“It isn’t something that was closely related to my surroundings, but it looks like there were some kind of a ball attended by the rich people. However, it was basically the custom of the old days.”

“I see.”

Haa, as I thought, it was that, huh.

Nah, it’s fine, though. After all, I’m getting tired of the former herbivorous system² where I’m just sitting down writing alphabets and reading books. If it’s a dance lessons, then it would mean I will be moving my body, and that will serve as a change of pace.

“Well, it will be awful if I were to step on someone else’s foot. I’ll be looking forward to it.”

“Yes. I’m also saved by the fact you’d accept the lesson without any resistance.”

There’s no way I’d resist, it’s something I must do, eventually.

If my dancing skill is poor, I will bring my father and the others shame, won’t I? Because the so-called villains would poke their nose even for any trifling matter.

Yeah well, I also don’t want to fall down because of a mistake I make during dancing, that’s the most important thing.

“Also, Seiren-sama.”

Kuon-sensei’s expression turned stiff, even though she was smiling up until now. Being stared at with that serious expression, I reflexively straightened myself.

“Please keep the talk we had just now as a secret. Ignoring whether the Shikino family is innocent or not, if this kind of talk leaks out, I believe it won’t be finished as a matter between the Shikino and Shiiya family only.”

At my teacher’s words which she said in a lower voice than her usual tone, I

couldn't say anything and just nodded.

Notes :

¹ A futon is a quilted Japanese-style mattress laid out on the floor.

² Not sure about this? The original Japanese word is “いくら元草食系”, and this is the whole sentence altogether : ずっと座りっぱなしで字を書いたり本読んだりしてると、いくら元草食系でも飽きてくるし。

Chapter 31: Murky, The Past Rumors

Since the month changes, I have started my dance practice.

But before that, there is one obstacle for me. First, I shall aim to overcome that obstacle.

“1, 2, 1, 2”

I have to keep my posture straight and walk with high heels as high as around 2 centimeters. This, the height of the heels is my obstacle.

No, it's not only high. Why is it that when the heels are already high, the ground surface is small? If I were to slip off a little bit, I will surely lose my balance and fall.

“Ah, woah!”

Look. If I am not holding Minoa-san's hand right now, then I would have already fallen on top of the floor. Nah, I kept falling over my ankles since before, so it didn't change very much. It hurts, it hurts.

“Are you alright, Seiren-sama?”

“Yeah-. Somehow.”

I sit down on the floor and look at the condition of my ankle. It seems to be slightly twisted, but well, this much should be fine. My ankles are fine, but the sole of my feet are cramping. Since the position that becomes the center of the gravity is different than usual, surely I will be overusing my feet too much, I think.

“It's harder than I thought, with these kinds of shoes, eh...”

“That is so. Since Seiren-sama is slightly of small stature-”

“You should get used to those shoes. However, the shoes you'll be wearing for the real performance would be higher than that.”

“Ghe-!”

Towards the words that came from Oriza-san who's watching my stance from

behind and Minoa-san who's supporting me, I hang my head heartbrokenly. The real thing is going to be higher than this one, huh? Just what kind of feet do women have? Ah well, but I am also a woman right now.

"That is why, please get used to it, okay? Seiren-sama!"

"I, I will put in a great effort to it... Uwaa, is this real?!"

With this kind of high heel, even with just standing, my ankles are already twisted. I'm done for, I guess.

Not only to walk, but why would anyone dance using this? They must have a really great sense of balance. Also, their ankles should be really strong.

The women's legs are slender, but for them to walk with this kind of shoes... In a sense, it would be some kind of a muscle training, right? Yes, I'm awfully convinced of that.

"Well, it certainly is real. Please try to get used to it, okay, Seiren?"

"So this is all real, huh..."

That being the case, Kaa-san who heard my idle complaint, responded by pleasantly laughing about it. As I thought, women are strong.

After today's dance—no, *walking* practice, I'm having a tea break in my mother's room after quite a while. Unusually, Saryuu was also there with us.

Or more precisely, this little brother of mine has something he wants to talk about, so he seems to join us for that purpose.

"Neesama's dance practice, why can't I join?"

.....Oi.

Is that it, dear little brother?

Or how should I put it, I still haven't memorized the dance's steps. It's just that I've been practicing to walk with the high heels.

And yet, why did you ask for it?

"Listen, Saryuu. In a dance, the role of a man is to lead. By leading, it means that the man's dancing skill should be really good."

So was Kaa-san's answer to Saryuu's question. I also hasn't started practicing my dance, so bear that in mind as well, Kaa-san.

By the way, that's the way a dance goes, I think. Well, since there's an arrangement for the man to lead while the woman follows, the one who leads should be skillful. If not, then the one who follows will surely be uneasy.

"You're already at the appropriate age too, but you haven't even grazed the 'da' character out of 'dance'".

"Ukh!"

Being told that plainly by Kaa-san, Saryuu faltered. Regardless of the dance, you can never defeat Kaa-san when it comes to debating, dear little brother.

I also don't have any motivation in winning, though. Also, Kaya-san is roughly shrugging her shoulders as if being intrigued by something. Even for her who's having Saryuuphile, this is also something interesting.

"I, I understand! I will also practice, so that I can act as my sister's partner!"

"Oh my, oh my. Good luck, Saryuu."

"Yes! Well then, please excuse me."

"Please wait, Saryuu-sama! T, then, please excuse me!"

Saryuu stood up vigorously, then he deeply bowed and left. However, he properly drank his tea. Well, that is typical of him.

Today, the maid who accompanied him wasn't Kanna-san, but a maid with a ponytail and round glasses who seems to be a type of a serious person, and she chased after him in a panic. I wonder if it will be quite hard for her to get driven around by Saryuu like this.

By the time Kaya-san, who saw Saryuu and the maid exited the room, closed the door and returned, Kaa-san turned to me.

"He has become a child who's thinking about his big sister, that Saryuu, eh?"

"Yeah. Well, it is far better than us being on bad terms, and it's not like I hate it for being liked."

"That is right. There is nothing better than siblings who are on good terms."

Kaa-san then heaved a big sigh. Huh, I wonder did something happen?

I wonder if it is alright to ask?

“...Did something happen?”

“No, well. ...I wonder if it’s alright to say it, Kaya?”

Kaa-san asked Kaya-san who’s making a second helping of the tea. I thought that it was a strange thing, but Kaya-san then calmly responded.

“You should do as you want, Madame. However, I think that it is something that she should know sooner or later.”

“That is right. ...Seiren.”

Aah, rather than asking, she seems to be confirming it.

Kaa-san then gazed at me who just comprehended the situation, and then she asked a question.

“Have you heard about Saryuu’s real parents?”

“Ah, a little bit, just before. He talked to me about how during the Spring Festival, his biological father came to meet him.”

“Yes.”

Shikino Touya.

I properly listened to the talk of Saryuu’s biological father who has the same name as the orphanage director who raised me.

“That, about Saryuu’s biological father. It’s about Touya-dono, but, he had a younger brother of the same age.”

“Are they twins?”

“No. ...Ah, right. In this house, there is only me so Seiren doesn’t understand it, huh.”

In other words, Saryuu had an uncle. The uncle is not his father’s twin, yet they are of a same age.

“The nobilities including the feudal lords are allowed to have up to two concubines. Touya-dono was the child of the concubine, while his little brother

Touka was the child of the legal wife.”

“Whoa.”

Ah-. Such is the pattern of the men who are wealthy.

Well, it is the world where their own children would succeed their houses, so it won't be that weird to have several wives. Because there exists such a thing, it is quite disastrous, right?

Anyway, the child of a concubine is the big brother, while the child of the legal wife is the little brother. Moreover, they were born in the same year.

The illustration of the family quarrel is staggeringly easy to understand, huh.

“And, it isn't like the older brother could succeed that easily, right? With that.”

“Yeah, something like that. Some said that the legal wife's child, Touka-dono should be the heir, while some also said that the concubine's child who is the older brother, Touya-dono should be the heir. Since my home was nearby, such a quarrel, no matter how the circumstances might be, it should have been kept confidentially but I came to hear that.”

“...The surroundings were also involved in it, huh...”

“At any rate, the related person himself, or I mean the younger brother Touka-dono seemed to feel like he had a hostile feeling to his own big brother. It seemed like he said things such as how he was the rightful heir, but since the older brother was born a little earlier than him, the older brother was so important-looking.”

Hold on, this, is it even pardoned to be troubled over it? To be frank, Kaa-san who's given all this talk looks as if she's being fed up with it.

In the first place, this is a really easy-to-understand pattern, is this seriously some kind of a historical drama?

Even still, I wonder how the older brother thought of this. Since I am a female, it's relatively no problem to hand over the position to Saryuu, but what if we were both males? Moreover, if we were of the same age.

Besides the person themselves, their retainers such as the servants or even

the merchants also seemed to be divided into the two different factions. With that kind of thing going, then there is no way to keep the problem a secret.

“And then. One day suddenly, Touka-dono’s figure couldn’t be found anywhere.”

Suddenly, Kaa-san’s voice became low. I tried to choose my words, in consideration to all the development I heard up to now.

“Uhm... In other words, did he die?”

“Officially, yes. They made up a story that he fell from a horse during a hunting along with a visitor from faraway.”

Officially.

Ah well-, to put it simply, did the concubine faction do something? It would surely be some murky rumors, right?

“After that, both the legal wife and the concubine passed away in succession due to some illnesses. The feudal lord with his two ladies all gone, then retired, and then Touya-dono succeeded the Shikino house. I think it was a talk of around 30 years ago?”

I think it might be a little controversial to say that there were no more obstacles at that time. In any case, Shikino Touya, the person with the same name as my foster parent, succeeded his own house.

“Well, after that, as the feudal lord, Touya-dono worked so hard, so nowadays there is no more person who’d talk about the rumors again. But since the successor in there is still a bachelor, this kind of talk is resounding again.”

“Ah, it’s scary for something to happen again, right?”

A murky case happened before the current feudal lord succeeded the house. That won’t limit the possibility of it not happening again to the next successor. In a house where that kind of trouble might arise, the house that would want to marry off their daughter to them is... well, none, I guess.

“...It is indeed bothersome, right?”

“You also think that?”

“Eh, well...”

Kaa-san who's stunned, shrugs her shoulders and nods. Even brothers who have the same father would do such things. However, in my case, it's a real daughter and the adopted son.

Well, was it better for me to keep my own opinion to myself here?

“But, in my case it's alright. I don't have any intention of succeeding the house.”

“Oh my.”

“I”

Kaa-san's eyes widened. And behind her, Kaya-san too, has a slightly astonished face. Nah, the one who stabbed her nails to me about Saryuu being the heir was you, right. I haven't told my mother that, though.

“I mean, Saryuu's here. I was brought up outside, so it won't be appropriate for me to succeed the family, right?”

“Is that okay? If that is the case, you would be married to another family somewhere, though.”

“If there is someone who wants me, right? And, someone who seems to be fine even if they were to know about me.”

That I was swept away one month after I was born.

Until recently, I was brought up as a man in another world.

No matter how you look at it, there would be lots of things that we can't keep as secrets.

If a man who would take this kind of me as his bride were to appear, to be frank, I would have no choice.

“...Is that so. There is no way we can keep silent about it, huh...”

Nah really, if we're silent about it, then it would be a fraud, right?

Though it is a secret that only me, my parents, Jigen-san, and Kuon-san know.